MADISON METROPOLITAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

545   West   Dayton   St.   ●   Madison,   Wisconsin   53703-1995   ■   608.663-1607   ▼   www.mmsd.org

Daniel A. Nerad, *Superintendent of Schools*

April 28, 2011

TO: Board of Education

FROM: Daniel A. Nerad, Superintendent

RE: K-12 Alignment

I. Introduction

A.   Title/topic: K-12 Alignment

B.   Presenter/contact person:
Sue Abplanalp, Jennie Allen, Sue Gorud, Phil Hubble, Ron Lott, Pam Nash, Kolleen Onsrud, Lisa Wachtel and Scott Zimmerman

C.   Background information: Key Strategic Plan Priorities identified by the Board of Education provide direction for addressing the MMSD's greatest challenges. According to research, the most effective curricular experiences are those that are coherent, coordinated, articulated, rigorous, and engaging throughout each student's K-12 education.

The Strategic Plan objectives include action steps in accelerated learning, assessment, civic engagement, cultural relevance, flexible instruction, research, leadership support, professional development and alignment from Pre-kindergarten through 12th grade in order to achieve our goals. These PreK-12 alignment efforts will improve district-wide articulation across grade levels while improving the fidelity of implementation within classrooms, grade levels, and individual schools.

D.   BOE action requested: None

II. Summary of Current Information

A.   Provide summary:
The primary purpose of systems alignment is to ensure that all staff have the necessary supports and encouragement to enable them to make instructional decisions for all students served for the improvement of learning. To align an instructional system, it is necessary to align the structures that have been developed to support high quality instruction horizontally across the many district departments and vertically from the Superintendent's cabinet to the classroom. This entails bringing coherence to the planning and implementation of the curriculum, instructional materials, assessment, data, and professional standards to reflect the rigor of the performance standards (Walters & O'Meara 2007). The presentation will involves initiatives that MMSD is pursuing that support this alignment.

B.   Recommendations and/or alternative recommendation(s):   None

C.   Link to supporting detail: N/A

III. Implications

A. Budget: The Strategic Plan budget is supporting teacher release time and summer employment to support these initiatives.

B. Strategic Plan: The Strategic Plan objectives include action steps for program coherence.

C. Equity Plan: The alignment process creates equal access to rigorous curriculum and resources needed for school improvement.

D. Implications for other aspects of the organization: This alignment process calls for central office transformation, adoption of an Instructional Framework and Cluster Support Teams work with school staff on a regular basis throughout the year.

IV. Supporting Documentation

A. Attachment A: Addressing the Needs of All Learners Through K-12 Alignment and Closing the Achievement Gap

B. Attachment B: Core Curriculum Instruction and Assessment Alignment PreK-12: An Overview and Frequently Asked Questions

C. Attachment C: Graphic Organizer of the Overall Plan

D. Attachment D: The Instructional Framework, 5 Dimensions of Teaching and Learning

E. Attachment E: Defining the Ideal Graduate

F. Attachment F: Summer School, Saturday School, PreK, and After School

G. Attachment G: Response to Intervention

H. Attachment H: Individualized Learning Plan

I. Attachment I: *What Does it Take for the District Central Office to Operate as a Learning Organization?* Meredith I. Honig, ERS Spectrum, Fall 2009, Vol. 27,No. 4, pp. 23-33.

J. Attachment J: *Reinventing District Central Offices to Expand Student Learning,* The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, www.centerforcsri.org, September 2008.

Addressing the Needs of All Learners
and Closing the Achievement Gap Through K-12 Alignment

MMSD Mission: The mission statement is a clear and concise expression of the district's purpose and function. The Strategic Planning Committee crafted the following mission statement for MMSD:

Our mission is to cultivate the potential in every student to thrive as a global citizen by inspiring a love of learning and civic engagement, by challenging and supporting every student to achieve academic excellence, and by embracing the full richness and diversity of our community.

Strategic Plan:
Key Strategic Plan Priorities identified by the Board of Education provide direction for addressing the MMSD's greatest challenges. According to research, the most effective curricular experiences are those that are coherent, coordinated, articulated, rigorous, and engaging throughout each student's K-12 education.

The Strategic Plan objectives include action steps in accelerated learning, assessment, civic engagement, cultural relevance, flexible instruction, research, leadership support, professional development and alignment from Pre-kindergarten through 12th grade in order to achieve our goals. These PreK-12 alignment efforts will improve district-wide articulation across grade levels while improving the fidelity of implementation within classrooms, grade levels, and individual schools.

Instructional Framework: MMSD is in the process of adopting an Instructional Framework from the University of Washington-College of Education, *The Five Dimensions of Teaching and Learning* (Attachment D). The Framework will support principals and central office staff in implementing rigorous, culturally relevant, coherent, standards-based curriculum and instructional programs. All professional development activities revolve around this instructional coherence relative to curricular standards. Increasing instructional coherence allows the school to reduce/eliminate distractions and focus on discrete school-wide/student performance outcomes/goals.

The new framework is focused on the "how" to make the Framework happen. We believe the previous framework helped us arrive at this new level of making "Engagement, Relationships and Learning" come to an accelerated level of understanding. The new 5 Dimensions of Learning Framework, adopted from the University of Washington, provides us with a rubric for teaching and learning which was absent in our previous Framework. We now have a solid foundation of how to assure all schools understand the essential elements needed for quality instruction.

How We Do Our Work:
School Improvement Plans (SIP): The purpose of the school improvement process is to improve outcomes for all students by (a) identifying changes needed and (b) putting into place actions to implement these changes. All school improvement plans are focused on Literacy and Assessments for the 2010-11 school year. The SIP process includes:
- identifying areas of strength and areas for growth through a thorough data analysis,
- determining possible root causes for challenges identified by schools,
- studying research to inform potential changes being planned,
- developing a plan by selecting goals, objectives, strategies, timelines and measurement for improvement,
- implementing the plan,
- evaluating progress regularly and monitoring student achievement.

Common Core and ACT Standards: To align vertically and horizontally (across and between grade levels) MMSD will begin to focus on Pre-K, elementary, middle, and high school alignment to the Common Core State Standards, Social Emotional Standards, and the ACT Career and College Readiness Standards in order to promote instructional program coherence across departments and schools. The high school REaL grant is a source of funding for this alignment though 2013.

Background:
Walters & O'Meara (2007) define a comprehensive aligned Instructional system as two parts for full alignment: Alignment of Instructional Systems, PreK-12 (schools) and Aligning to Support Instruction, PreK-12 (Central Office). What follows is a description of the K-12 alignment process that is under way for improving education for students and district operations.

Aligning Instructional Systems to Support Schools:
The primary purpose of systems alignment is to ensure that all staff have the necessary supports and encouragement to enable them to make instructional decisions for all students served for the improvement of learning. To align an instructional system, it is necessary to align the structures that have been developed to support high quality instruction horizontally across the many district departments and vertically from the Superintendent's cabinet to the classroom. This entails bringing coherence to the planning and implementation of the curriculum, instructional materials, assessment, data, and professional standards to reflect the rigor of the performance standards (Walters & O'Meara 2007). What follows are initiatives that MMSD is pursuing that support this alignment.

Initiatives in Progress – 2010-11 School Year

What is MMSD Currently Doing to Address the Needs of All Learners and Close the Achievement Gap?

There are many things the district is currently doing to address the needs of all learners. Through continuous examination of our data, central office also determined a need to work differently with schools to support principals and staff in closing the achievement gap. During the course of the 2010-11 school year, the Superintendent, the Deputy Superintendent, Assistant Superintendents, Executive Directors of Educational Services, Student Services, Curriculum and Instruction and Professional Development and the Grant Coordinator have been developing a process which commits to whole district transformation. This planning team, through continuous research of successful districts with similar demographics as ours, posits that to begin to change achievement patterns, districts need to work collaboratively and focus at both ends of the K-12 continuum. By mapping backward from our high school graduation standards, we are establishing benchmarks starting in kindergarten that will prepare students for college and career readiness at the end of high school. This plan, which includes supporting schools differently, through cluster support, aligning standards, curriculum and assessment, and communicating high expectations, will be ready for implementation for the 2011-12 school year.

Meeting the Needs of All Learners by Aligning Instructional Systems to Support Schools:
The primary purpose of systems alignment is to ensure that all staff have the necessary supports and encouragement to enable them to make instructional decisions for all students served for the improvement of learning.

1. **Processes Used K-12 to Support Alignment So Every Child Receives an Equitable Education**
    a. *NEW INITIATIVE* - **PreK-12 Scope & Sequence Alignment:** This is the process of aligning 4K, elementary, middle, and high curriculum, instruction, and assessment to the Common Core State Standards, Social Emotional Standards, and the ACT Career and College Readiness Standards. This is done by developing common units of study per subject area through a methodology of "Align by Design" using a software tool, Eclipse. The purpose is to assure that all students are held to the same rigor in their academic career.
    b. *NEW INITIATIVE* - **Individual Learning Plans (ILP) K-12 so Every Child has a Roadmap to Their Future:** The Strategic Plan action steps identify ILPs for all grade levels. Elementary ILPs began in fall, 2010 to provide parents and students with year-long goals to support college and career readiness thinking at the very beginning of one's education. The concept is, "What should be the goal/s for my child this year?" The process of identifying goals each year at the elementary level begins at Ready Set Goal Conferences. Results of first year ILP implementation survey to parents and teachers indicated that teachers have less satisfaction of the benefits of the ILP. Parents, however, found the tool beneficial to understanding the

direction of their child for that grade. A committee has been formed (K-5) to make recommendations for better implementation of the process and accountability in the future.

c.   *YEAR 3 INITIATIVE* - **REaL Grant to Organize Our High Schools Around 21st Century Skills and to Personalize Student Learning:** In 2008, MMSD received a $5.3 million Small Learning Communities grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The purpose of the grant is to increase collaboration among staff and initiate bold new systems and activities to improve the educational experiences for all MMSD high school students. MMSD titled the project Relationships, Engagement and Learning (REaL).The project has three goals: Increase Academic Success for all Students, Strengthen Student to Student Relationships/Strengthen Student to Adult Relationships, and Improve Post-Secondary Outcomes for all Students. This grant will support the alignment of all four high schools and the following initiatives are an outgrowth of this work:
     -Grant Coordinators and Literacy Coaches at each high school
     -Engagement Coordinators at each high school to focus on non-engaged students
     -9th grade initiatives for on track graduation
     -Expansion of Project Road - serving students at risk of not graduating
     -Work with Dr. Carl Grant's multicultural college group and PEOPLE Program to survey ways they think
     -Implementation of System 44 for high school reading interventions.

d.   *NEW INITIATIVE* - **Career Planning via Career Cruising - an Opportunity to Learn About Goals Beyond the Student's Current Knowledge Base:** High schools will adopt the 9th grade Career Cruising Individual Learning Plan in spring, 2011 and the process for building the goal will continue throughout their college years. The district goal is to begin 6th grade middle schools and additional high school grade levels following the 9th grade implementation process as the software and professional development becomes available for staff and students.

e.   *NEW INITIATIVE* - **Transition Plans so Students Successfully Move Level to Level:** Principals from elementary, middle, and high schools have worked in feeder patterns monthly to identify best practices in supporting students as they transition from level to level. Once the project is completed, a coherent PreK-12 transition plan will be in place with minimal expectations, for transition and orientation at each school across the district.

2.   **Educational Programs That Close the Achievement Gap and Accelerate Learning:**

a.   *NEW INITIATIVE* - **K-12 Literacy Focus:** As a result of the Literacy Program Evaluation process, the district is committed to establish and maintain K-12 common core literacy programs and instructional practices. The following recommendations were provided to the Board of Education for approval:

1.   Intensify reading instruction in Kindergarten in order to ensure all students are proficient in oral reading and comprehension as measured by valid and reliable assessments by 2011-2012. Instruction and assessment will be benchmarked to ensure Kindergarten proficiency is at reading levels 3-7 (PLAA, 2009).

2.   Fully implement Balanced Literacy in 2011-12 using clearly defined, consistent practices and progress monitoring. In addition:
     a.   Explore research-based reading curricula with particular focus on targeted and explicit instruction, to develop readers in Kindergarten. Pilot the new reading curricula in volunteer schools during 2011-12.
     b.   Analyze Kindergarten reading proficiency scores from Kindergarten students in fully implemented Balanced Literacy schools and Kindergarten students in the volunteer schools piloting the new reading curricula incorporated into a Balanced Literacy framework.

3.   Incorporate explicit reading instruction and literacy curricula into 6th grade instruction.

4.   Identify and implement consistent district-wide strategies for reading in all content areas in grades 7-12. Consider using exemplary district models resulting in dramatic student achievement gains such as the Brockton (MA) High School (Transformed by Literacy, Principal Leadership, 2010);

5.   Develop integrated units to support reading and writing skills as a part of the K-12 alignment process in all content areas.

6. Identify, develop and implement literacy core practices for all grades, with particular attention to secondary grades 6-12. In order to identify core practices in literacy at the secondary level, teams of practitioners will be collaborating to identify particular high-leverage aspects of both reading and writing that are essential for all students to know and be able to perform with proficiency or better. Teams will use such resources as the Common Core State Standards, the ACT Standards, the Wisconsin State Superintendent's Adolescent Literacy Plan, the Carnegie Report on Adolescent Literacy, and other current, research-based publications.

b. *5-YEAR INITIATIVE* - **Play and Learn Program, so Parents and Caregivers Support Children in Early Development:** Play and Learn is a free program for children from birth to five years old and their caregivers. Play and Learn is a playgroup that meets once a week in community settings and provides a variety of activities, such as stories, cooking, pretending, building, or crafts for caregivers and children to do together. Children learn early math, literacy and social skills, while caregivers learn about child development and receive materials and ideas to enhance learning activities at home. The program is collaboration between the Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) and the United Way with over 18 sites in the Madison area and Dane County.

c. *NEW INITIATIVE* - **4-Year-Old Kindergarten so That All Young Children Have a Strong Start:** The primary reason for the Madison Metropolitan School District's implementation of four-year-old kindergarten (4K) is to better prepare all students for educational success. Similarly, the community and society as a whole receive many positive benefits when students are well prepared for learning at a young age. MMSD will implement 4K in September, 2011, to support kindergarten readiness in the future.

d. *12-YEAR INITIATIVE* - **Small Class Size:** The district continues to support small class size by committing to the Wisconsin SAGE program and supplementing schools with low socioeconomic family status. In addition, class sizes in K-1 were reduced in other schools to reflect more closely the SAGE classrooms. Middle and High Schools continue to be monitored yearly to assure class sizes are in line with the district's priorities.

e. *7-YEAR INITIATIVE* - **Dual Language Immersion Results Show Higher Academic Achievement:** One of the many goals for dual language immersion programs is to develop bilingual and bi-literate students in English and Spanish. To accomplish this, classroom teachers are using best practices in literacy instruction, engaging parents in supporting learning at home, and making use of school libraries and librarians as a critical resource in this process. MMSD currently has four elementary and one middle Dual Immersion sites. The expansion plan calls for additional sites and exploration of multiple languages for the future of the district.

f. *5-YEAR INITIATIVE AND NEEDING EXPANSION* - **AVID Teaching Students Exactly How to Succeed in School:** AVID is currently provided in all four high schools. The district is recommending full implementation in middle school and eventually in 4th and 5th grades. In AVID, students learn study skills, Cornell note-taking, and other academic note taking strategies, time management, organization, test readiness, critical thinking, writing to learn, and group study skills. AVID is for first generation college students, under-represented minority students, highly motivated students, students in the academic middle with the potential to excel, rigorous curriculum, students with positive behavior and good attendance, students with fluctuating (C-B) grades due to inconsistent study habits or poor study skills, and students who plan to attend a college or university upon graduation. AVID is provided nationally from 4th-12th grade. It would be beneficial for our students to experience this program in all MMSD schools to support Career and College Readiness.

g. *NEW INITIATIVE* - **Talented and Gifted with a Focus on Identifying Under Represented Populations and Meeting the Needs of Students:** Progress continues toward the goals contained in the Talented and Gifted Education Plan that was approved August 17, 2009. Assessment tools continue to be reviewed to support the student identification process. In March, 2011, CogAT was administered to 2nd and 5th grade students for identification of students needing more challenging support. An aligned system of support is currently being developed as a result of the TAG Plan. Students who need to pursue more focused instruction have opportunities through Project Lead the Way, CNA training, Global Academy, Madison Virtual Campus, University of Wisconsin, Edgewood College, or Madison College courses.

We also have credit earning agreements with post secondary institutions that allow a student to earn credit that will count in high school and in college. The Cluster Support model will assure continued monitoring of data and conversations with principals about identification and programming for students.

   h.   ***NEW INITIATIVE* - Realignment with Schools of Hope Because Schools Can't Do It Alone:** MMSD staff are working in partnership with United Way and Americorp Volunteers to develop a better aligned tutorial service for MMSD students. Schools of Hope was realigned in September, 2010 to target kindergarten, third, and fourth grades. In addition, plans are currently being developed for the transition years of sixth and ninth grades.

   i.   ***NEW INITIATIVE* - Expanded Summer School - More Time to Learn and Develop:** The alignment of summer school is being viewed as a 5th quarter of school. The new proposed summer school model would be similar to the school year with academic offerings EC-12 for acceleration, enrichment, extended school year (ESY), and integrated employment support. Research-based practices and interventions would be utilized to increase opportunities for learning and to enhance student achievement across the district (Dede, 2008; Odden & Archibald, 2008). Students with disabilities and English Language Learners would have access to the core curriculum via Universal Design for Learning (UDL) along with non-disabled peers.

   j.   ***2-YEAR INITIATIVE* - Academic After School - A Way to Reinforce the Day's Instruction:** After school has an academic component in literacy and math that aligns to this scope and sequence and the MMSD Strategic Plan. Infusing academics into after school programs is critical to closing the achievement gap and preparing all students for the 21st Century. After school is a valuable time for students to receive accelerated learning and enrichment opportunities (Alexander et al., 2007). This year, the Department of Early & Extended Learning is working in partnership with the Madison School & Community Recreation (MSCR) to increase students' literacy and math skills in after school programs by providing curriculum, resources, and professional development.

   k.   ***NEW INITIATIVE* - Saturday School Pilot- Another Chance to Gain Targeted Skills:** The pilot Saturday School program is provided as an extended learning opportunity in primarily literacy and math for students at schools who based on WKCE scores are not being successful in literacy or math. Research indicates that providing this intervention to elementary students is a valuable way to promote future success in school (Coghlan et. al., 2009). Saturday school aligns to rigorous standards and grade level proficiencies. Each Saturday school session allows students to receive four hours of high quality, structured activities for enrichment, academic learning, and tutoring.

   l.   ***ONGOING INITIATIVE* - Alternative Programs:** The district has a variety of alternative programs aimed at keeping students in school and school completion. We are in the process of redesigning some of the alternative programs to create school pilots next year in each of the four attendance areas.

3.   ***NEW INITIATIVE* - Aligned Instructional Strategies to Meet the Needs of All Learners:** Teachers need to know the power of instructional strategies of the core content being taught, including instructional sequence of the content and the tier of interventions needed for all students to have access to rigorous curriculum. The response to intervention (RtI) needs to transfer in support of English Language Learners, special education, and struggling students. Finally, assessments are in place to determine whether or not core instruction is being taught and learned (Walters & O'Meara 2007). Following are initiatives under way in the district.

   a.   ***2-YEAR INITIATIVE* - Classroom Environment - It Matters:** The classroom environment is essential in responding to student needs. Teacher to student relationships have been identified in the research as one of the most critical achievement components for minority students. **Responsive Classrooms** - Developmental Designs is a K-8 approach to building community, establishing positive relations, and effectively managing student behavior at the classroom level. It is often described as the "classroom piece of PBS." Teachers using this approach report an increase in student engagement, a decrease in inappropriate behaviors, and a collective sense of caring students and staff.

b. ***NEW INITIATIVE* - Response to Intervention - Identifying Skill Gaps Early:** Response to Intervention (RtI) is the practice of providing high quality instruction and scaffolded interventions matched to student need, monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals, and applying student response data to important educational decisions. RtI should be applied to decisions in general, remedial and special education, creating a well integrated system of instruction/intervention guided by student outcome data (Elliot & Morrison, 2008 NASDSE). An MMSD RtI Team is establishing an aligned plan with the following outcomes:
- Establish an RtI vision and a theory of action for the district
- Define the strengths and challenges of RtI
- Make connections to other district work
- Provide common understandings and language

c. ***3-YEAR INITIATIVE* - Cultural Practices That Are Relevant (CPR) - Must Be Used Universally:** As a district, we are investigating and piloting practices that engage and motivate students from a variety of backgrounds and cultures. As we identify practices that support student efficacy, we incorporate these strategies in all district and building level professional development in order to affect instruction throughout the district. Falk and Mendota Elementary are in their second year of working collaboratively in order to document best practices in culturally relevant literacy instruction, and have been joined by Lowell and Hawthorne in 2010-11. Additionally, at the secondary level, middle and high school teachers from around the district are participating in an eight-day professional development series designed to support them in becoming Culturally Relevant and Culturally Responsive Teachers. Our ultimate goal is to develop culturally relevant instructional models and materials that support the district effort to decrease the achievement gap and eliminate disproportionality in targeted demographic areas. In addition to this work being done, the Family and Community Outreach division has focused on numerous outreach initiatives to support underrepresented families:
    -Family Involvement positions for Latino and Hmong languages recently hired
    -Acceleration of Empowerment Groups (Pastor Richard L. Jones, Omega Boys Club).
    -Teachers of color groups to help with district initiatives and to connect with families of color.
    -Citywide Family Involvement Group
    -Consortium of health and dental providers to offer free access to all uninsured children.

d. ***3-YEAR INITIATIVE* - Teaching Children Behaviors that Lead to School Success - Positive Behavior Support:** Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) is a research-based model for supporting positive behavior in all students. It focuses on proactive approaches in which expected behaviors are directly taught, regularly practiced, and followed by frequent positive reinforcement. Every MMSD elementary, middle, and high school has a PBS Leadership Team that meets regularly to guide the important work of (1) developing school-wide behavioral expectations, (2) identifying specific behaviors that define each of these expectations and teaching them to all students, (3) acknowledging and celebrating student behavioral success, (4) using data to determine which behaviors should be taught and which students need additional instruction and support to learn them, and (5) sharing the PBS work with parents and families. Schools implementing PBS with fidelity show a marked decrease in office referrals and suspensions resulting in increased time for student learning.

e. ***ONGOING INITIATIVE* - Instructional Design: Classroom Organizational Structure that Supports Learning.** This includes clustering students together in inclusive learning groups, assigning appropriate teachers and other resources to these classrooms, and creating schedules that support the instructional goals for all students and the interventions needed. The Instructional Design also ensures that teachers are able to work together in collaborative teams to provide universally designed differentiated instruction.

f. ***NEW INITIATIVE* - Balanced, Common Assessment Systems- Aligned to Inform Instruction:** Teachers need to be provided with well-developed diagnostic and benchmark assessments and quick, quality reports of results to assess where to take students to the next teaching level. An assessment committee is in the process of making recommendations for formative common assessments for alignment K-12 (which means frequent tracking of where students are so that we catch students early and intervene using different techniques for

learning).. Also, ACT, Explore, Plan, MAP, CogAT, PLAA, PMA will be used in addition to the state WKCE for better alignment across the district to create a common balanced assessment system.

g. *2-YEAR INITIATIVE K-8* - **Measuring Student Hope, Engagement, and Well Being - The Gallup Survey:** The results of this year's data indicate that our district compares well within the range of state and nation. Responses of the surveys are used to enhance the climate of the schools in support of students, 5-12.

h. *NEW AND OLD INITIATIVE* - **Time to Plan, Think and Problem Solve Together:** Elementary schools have early release on Monday afternoon and middle and high schools have early release on Wednesday afternoon (Professional Collaboration Time: PCT). This time has allowed the district to enhance its professional development conversations for all schools, grade levels, or departments around ways to enhance instruction and close the achievement gap. Plans are being developed for each of the grade levels with a focus on literacy, K-12. The new contract language for elementary schools will foster more collaboration and site based professional development.

i. *3-YEAR INITIATIVE* - **Embedded Professional Development:** All elementary schools are provided with on-site Instructional Resource Teachers (IRTs) to support teachers and program development. Middle schools have Learning Coordinators and Interventionists (providing direct support to students) to support professional development. High schools have Department Chairs and Literacy Coaches to support professional development initiatives. Plans are being developed to have all three levels of support staff learn together through targeted professional development in the area of literacy and assessments for the 2011-12 school year.

j. *NEW INITIATIVE* – **Development of Cluster Teams, Supporting Schools through Central Office:** School cluster support teams will be formed so that district office staff will be systematically providing direct support to principals as the primary focus. There is a positive correlation between the amount of time central office spent in schools and principals perception of feeling supported. Principals and staff will be provided professional development in order to understand the cluster model of support provided for schools in the summer. Cluster support teams will provide a variety of services for schools to enhance principal and staff learning and support student outcomes. Five Cluster Support Teams will be developed: High School Cluster, K-8 La Follette Cluster, K-8 West Cluster, K-8 East Cluster, and K-8 Memorial Cluster.

k. *NEW INITIATIVE* - **Instructional Rounds, A New Way of Observing Classrooms with Focus:** The process of Instructional Rounds is two-fold, It provides school and central office staff opportunities to observe and learn from classroom visits. Staff will be provided with professional development in the instructional rounds (modeled after medical rounds) practice so that they may participate more fully in its purpose of improving practice and improving one's learning.

l. *NEW INITIATIVE* - **Data Dashboard, to Provide Easier Accessibility of Data for Staff:** The district office is in the process of implementing a new data dashboard to support central office and schools in the analysis of multiple data sources to support School and District Improvement Plans (SIP). The program will be rolled out in June, with ongoing professional development throughout the summer and fall. Data will be consistently used and analyzed on a frequent basis in the Cluster Support conversations.

m. *NEW INITIATIVE* - **Realignment of District Curriculum Funds (ELM):** The district recently redesigned its operating procedures to support curriculum district priorities. All curriculum materials are being ordered centrally for the purpose of alignment and fiscal responsibility.

n. *ONGOING INITIATIVE* - **School Improvement Planning:** This process, which requires each school to examine and analyze data to identify specific improvement plans, is going to be enhanced next year through the Cluster Support initiatives.

o. *ONGOING INITIATIVE K-12* - **Data Workshops:** These workshops have been ongoing with a purpose of item analysis to uncover problems and frequent progress monitoring of school and district progress.

p. *ONGOING INITIATIVE* - **Minority Staff Recruitment Selection, Retention and Hiring:** A plan is in place with a focus on diversity hiring for cultural competency, especially for bilingual

teachers which has increased yearly in the district. Acceleration of Freedom/Summer School Opportunities is a program in place to improve hiring practices.

q. *1-YEAR INITIATIVE* - **Mini-Grants for Schools:** A focus on reducing disproportionality in our schools and to create inclusionary practices in schools has now been elevated by offering schools an opportunity to apply for mini grants called Race to the Top Grants.

r. *1-YEAR INITIATIVE* - **Targeted Stimulus Funds:** Over the past two years, funds to address areas of need have been targeted in central office and in schools.

s. *ONGOING INITIATIVE* - **Principal/Teacher Mentors:** Retired teachers and principals for new staff are in place to support new staff and assure alignment to district initiatives.

4. *NEW INITIATIVE* - **Aligning Central Office to Support Instruction:**
All significant school reform begins with the administrator's collective capacity to lead. There is much research that indicates a positive relationship between effective leadership and student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Riehl, 2000; Scheurich, 2002) as well as successful inclusive school communities (Keyes, 1996; Thousand & Villa, 1990; Villa et al, 1996).

Developing a Theory of Action to provide better support for principals/school staff will ensure powerful learning for all students. The superintendent has relied upon research of Honig et al, 2010, through the University of Washington, in reconceptualizing the role of central office administration in creating a high performing inclusive school district. As a result of this work, the superintendent is making substantial changes in reorganizing central office roles and responsibilities to support principals/school staff in instructional improvement.

The MMSD is poised to undertake its reform efforts in a manner consistent with the findings of numerous research-based practices of highly effective schools (Williams et al. 2005, Marzano et al, 2005, and Leithwood et al, 2004)). Critical to this process is aligning all improvement efforts to reach a limited number of high impact goals thus creating what Newmann et al. (2001) refers to as "instructional coherence." Strengthening the academic core is absolutely essential to systemic change resulting in equitable achievement outcomes. The intent of this reform process is to align curriculum, teaching pedagogy/methodology, assessment, professional development, hiring/evaluation procedures, and allocation of resources to the central goal of improving student achievement.

a. *3 YEAR INITIATIVE* - **Strategic Plan:** Key Strategic Plan Priorities identified by the Board of Education provide direction for addressing the MMSD's greatest challenges. According to research, the most effective curricular experiences are those that are coherent, coordinated, articulated, rigorous, and engaging throughout each student's K-12 education. Central office transformation is the structure that supports the new initiatives of the district.

b. *NEW INITIATIVE* - **Instructional Framework:** MMSD is in the process of adopting an Instructional Framework from the University of Washington-College of Education, called Five Dimensions of Teaching and Learning **(Appendix D).** The Framework will support principals and central office staff in implementing rigorous, culturally relevant, coherent, standards-based curriculum and instructional programs.

c. *NEW INITIATIVE* - **MMSD Program Evaluation Protocol and Curricular Renewal Cycles,** as defined in the Strategic Plan, ensure that curricular issues are analyzed regularly to promote fiscal responsibility and to increase effectiveness and sustainability. To evaluate all programs on a cyclical basis and make necessary adjustments to improve core instruction as well as effective research-based interventions to accelerate student learning

d. *NEW INITIATIVE* - **Cluster Teams:** Central office staff will be provided professional development in order to serve schools in a cluster model of support. Cluster support teams will consist of licensed staff and administrators serving one of five clusters in the district. These teams provide principals and staff support and accountability for student success.

e. *NEW INITIATIVE* - **Instructional Rounds:** The process of Instructional Rounds will be used as part of the purpose of central office staff supporting schools in their problems of practice and to learn themselves more about the practices within schools.

ONGOING INITIATIVE - Districtwide Evaluation of Effectiveness: The district will implement several strategies to determine the effectiveness of its initiatives:

f. Ongoing Analysis of Student Data
g. Annual State of the District Report
h. Program Evaluation Review Cycle
i. Annual Strategic Plan Meetings for Feedback
j. Community Conversations Feedback
k. Climate Survey: Students, Staff, and Families
l. Development of a new Administrator Evaluation (360 Model)
m. Staff Evaluations
n. ILP Effectiveness Survey to Parents and Teachers
o. IRT Survey of Effectiveness in elementary schools will be extended to middle and high schools in the future
p. Gallup Student Poll Survey on Engagement, Hope and Well-Being
q. Parent Council Feedback
r. Teacher Council Feedback
s. Student Senate Feedback
t. High School REaL Grant Evaluation

Challenges: With a new strategic plan unfolding in its second year, a major challenge is determining the "right" work (Marzano, 2005) and limiting the number of major initiatives despite the numerous areas of concern. There will be several tough decisions ahead as the district must planfully abandon some of its previous ways in order to address new standards and to provide a 21st century education which prepares students for a global economy.

The Madison Metropolitan School District's Core Instructional Alignment (CIA) Team is comprised of the leaders of all educational departments (deputy superintendent, assistant superintendents, executive director of educational services, executive director of curriculum and assessment, executive director of student services, grants and funds developer, and director of professional development). The team is committed to developing a districtwide plan for alignment, supported through the work central office transformation, which would begin to be implemented during the 2011-12 school year. Professional development for Cluster Support Teams will begin late spring and summer.

Research over the last 40 years consistently demonstrates that teacher quality is the single most important schooling factor influencing student achievement (Coleman, 1966, Hanushek, 1992; Goldhaber, 2007; Rice (2003); Halbach et al. (2001); Greenwald, Hedges, & Laine (1996); Allington & Cunningham, 2002; Allington, (2005). The team is keenly aware that to improve student outcomes we need to significantly improve the efficacy of our current staff and make excellent hiring decisions in the future. A significant component of our implementation plan will be a commitment to on-going professional development and learning around instructional improvement, use of data, ongoing evaluation and culturally relevant practices. As the team is responsible for leading all curriculum, instruction, and assessment decisions, it is our hope this direction will strengthen the instructional core of our school system. It is also our belief that in doing so, we will be on a better path to eliminate the achievement gaps between white/non-white students, middle and upper income/lower income backgrounds, and reduce the disproportionate identification of minority and low income students with disabilities, and at the same time improve the learning outcomes for all students.

MADISON METROPOLITAN SCHOOL DISTRICT
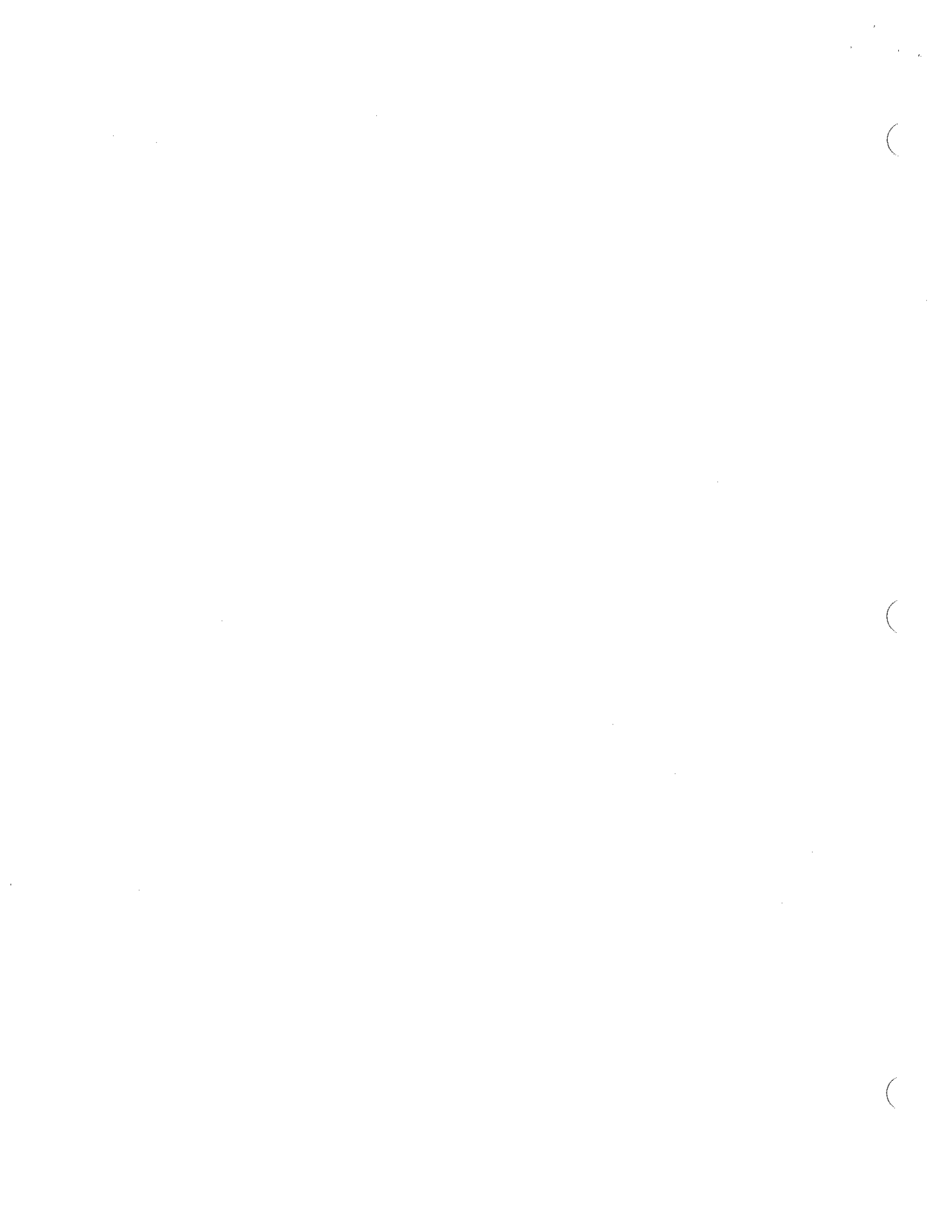
Madison Metropolitan School District
Core Curriculum Instruction and Assessment Alignment PreK-12
An Overview and Frequently Asked Questions

Goal
To meet today's learning standards, effective school districts must ensure all students are college and career ready.

Rationale for PreK-12 Alignment
Ensuring all students are ready for college and career requires systemic improvement. To guide the Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) toward this urgent accomplishment, research strongly indicates that curriculum, instruction and assessment must be aligned. A district that is aligned PreK-12 will strengthen its capacity to:

- increase student learning and achievement;
- improve and focus teacher collaboration, professional development and progress monitoring;
- increase efficient use of resources supervision and support of teaching and learning.

Why should the district focus on PK-12 alignment? What is the research evidence supporting alignment?
Alignment is beneficial to at least three educational levels: students, teachers, and systems. Multiple research strands suggest that alignment is an important student learning factor in: brain-based learning (building on prior knowledge, seeking patterns) (Jensen, 1998), overall student learning (Marzano, 2003; Squires, 2009), learning for low-income, students of color, first-generation, linguistically diverse, and/or high mobility students in P-12 (Anderson, 2002; Edvantia, 2005; Southwest Comprehensive Center, 2005; Squires, 2009; WestEd, 2010) and P-16 (Institute of Education Sciences, 2009; Pathways to College Network, 2006). Teachers benefit from alignment by improved and focused collaboration, professional development and progress monitoring (Anderson, 2002; Newmann, King, & Youngs, 2000; Newmann, Smith, Allensworth, & Bryk, 2001). School and districts benefit from alignment through more efficient use of resources; clearer focus, supervision, and support of teaching and learning, increased capacity for systems learning, and improved student learning (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2009; Knapp et al., 2003).

In a system that is not aligned, teachers are required to create their own curriculum and assessments, acquire pedagogical skills on their own and provide their hand made instructional materials. Alignment, through a scope and sequence creates equal educational access and supports to students and teachers. It also provides teachers with a framework to administer minimum lessons in sequential order, while supplementing the core content with additional material as desired (Walters & O'Meara, 2010).

Alignment Tools
MMSD will align curriculum, instruction and assessment using the Common Core State Standards and the ACT College and Career Readiness Standards.

Common Core State Standards
The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were adopted by the State of Wisconsin on June 2, 2010. These standards address English Language Arts, Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and the Technical Subjects, and Mathematics. These standards are aligned with college and career readiness expectations and were adopted to help ensure academic consistency throughout the state and across

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other states that adopt them, and have been benchmarked against international standards from high-performing countries. State Superintendent Tony Evers stated that "These English language arts and mathematics standards will serve as a solid foundation to ensure every child is a graduate ready for the workforce or postsecondary studies. Higher student achievement is driven by rigorous standards, high quality curriculum, and assessments that provide meaningful feedback to improve instruction."

ACT College and Career Readiness Standards

The ACT College and Career Readiness Standards (CRS) define the knowledge and skills students need to develop and master in English mathematics, reading and science in order to be college and career ready. The ACT College and Career Readiness Standards outline a clear and coherent pathway designed to help students increase their academic readiness for college and careers in the 21st-century. ACT has published these standards to provide a national model of rigorous academic content standards that states, districts, schools and teachers may use to vertically and horizontally align curriculum, instruction, assessment and professional development to prepare students to align practice that prepares students for career and college readiness. These rigorous standards:

- provide a model set of comprehensive standards for middle school and high school courses that lead to college and workplace readiness;
- reflect 21st-century skills such as problem solving, critical and creative thinking, collaboration, and media and technological literacy;
- articulate clear standards and objectives with supporting, in-depth performance expectations to guide instruction and curriculum development;
- provide teachers, districts and states with tools for increasing the rigor and alignment of courses across grades PreK-12 to college and workplace readiness; and
- assist teachers in designing lessons and classroom assessments.

(ACT, 2010)

Connections Between the ACT and the Common Core Standards

In the simplest terms, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) identify overarching concepts to align to; the ACT College and Career Readiness Standards identify skills that support student understanding of the concept. This alignment, or overlap, is labeled in the section of the CCSS called "College and Career Readiness Strand Skills" (Attachment A). Here's how it looks, using English and Math as two examples:

The English/Language Arts CCSS provide the learning strands that students are expected to know and be able to do. The ACT provides skills that have been determined to foster success in post-secondary settings. The overlap in the Common Core is called the "College and Career Readiness Strand Skills".

ELA Common Core		ACT English
Content Strands	Strand Skills	Skills
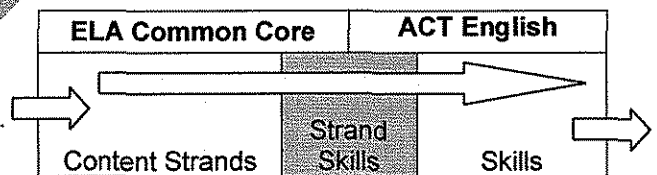
The Mathematics Common Core State Standards provide a different look, but can be viewed with a similar approach. In Math, alignment would begin with the Domains, then the Standards. The Standards align with similar ACT standards, which are more skill-based.

Math Common Core		ACT Math
Domain	Standards	Standards/Skills
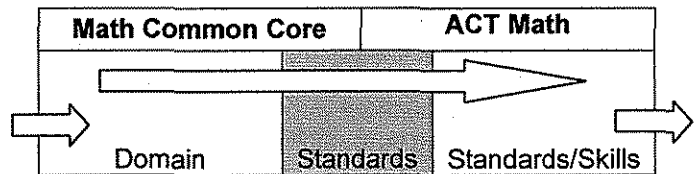
Alignment Process

Aligning our curriculum, scope and sequence with the Common Core State Standards and the ACT College and Career Readiness Standards is not an either/or, but a both/and concept; a framework and process for MMSD to use to systematically organize our work in order to foster increased student learning. Aligning to both sets of standards will provide a process to align curriculum, instruction and assessment that prepares students for college (two or four year) or career. MMSD is beginning with the end goal in mind, as teams of teachers, administrators, and district staff will form committees to develop

PreK-12 alignment. First the committee will define the academic demands students will face in the core content areas. After identifying these demands, the committees will backmap PreK-12 a vertical progression, or road map, of critical thinking skills and knowledge students need to be prepared for college-level work. The end result will be a vertically aligned PreK-12 system.

> According to Wiggins and McTighe (2007), "The job is not to hope that optimal learning will occur, based on our curriculum and initial teaching. The job is to ensure that learning occurs, and when it doesn't, to intervene in altering the syllabus and instruction decisively, quickly, and often" (p. 55).

As Collins also implies in _Good to Great_ (2001), school districts must confront the brutal facts of their current reality in order to improve. The Strategic Plan, approved in June 2009, indicated that K-12 curriculum was not aligned, there are achievement gaps, and demographics of advanced courses show very few children of color enrolled.

MMSD has as its mission to cultivate the potential in every student to thrive as a global citizen by inspiring a love of learning and civic engagement, by challenging and supporting every student to achieve academic excellence, and by embracing the full richness and diversity of our community. The Strategic Plan, adopted in June, 2009 defines clear action steps to begin the alignment of this work for the district, a segment of these steps are represented below:

1. Map current course sequences in all content areas K-12, identifying prerequisites and obstacles in order to improve achievement for all students and close the achievement gap, reduce barriers for all students and identify opportunity gaps. (See also TAG Plan, Goal 2, Appendix B)
2. Analyze course sequences and allocate resources to address inconsistencies and inequities across the district.
3. Analyze course enrollment and successful completion for all student groups to determine baseline data for comparison and growth. (See also Cultural Relevance Step 1)
4. Define rigor, accelerated learning and 21st Century skills to build common language and understanding.
5. Use curriculum mapping (e.g. Eclipse) to determine standards-based outcomes and improve learning pathways and course sequence by identifying gaps and repetition. Focus initially at secondary level.

Questions about Curriculum, Instruction, Assessments and the Alignment Process

What does curriculum, instruction, assessment and alignment mean?

Alignment means that all instructional program systems are coherent and focused toward increased student learning. Critical indicators of an aligned system are:

- Teachers within a grade purposely link their curriculum (including arts, health, library, computers, etc.) to stated learning goals and use common instructional strategies and assessments.
- Teachers coordinate curriculum and assessments to avoid repetition and to offer students new and more complex aspects of subject matter from grade to grade.
- School-sponsored support programs (e.g. field trips, tutoring, after-school programming) are linked to curriculum instruction, and assessment.
- Professional development for staff members supports the implementation of common curriculum, instructional strategies and balanced assessments.
- Professional development programs are sustained over time.
- The school strategically accepts and refuses programs and initiatives in a manner that supports staff focus, program continuity, and on-going improvement.
- School improvement planning and assessment directly address the school's progress in providing a coordinated and sustained school program.
- Over time, curriculum remains reasonably stable and provides teachers with sustained opportunities to learn how to teach it well. It also gives teachers ongoing opportunities to teach students how to succeed.

- Over time, teaching assignments and key program leaders or leadership positions remain stable.
- Evaluation of programs is cyclical.
- Evaluation process of all educators is in line with program coherence.

Adapted from Newman, F., Smith, B., Allensworth, E., & Bryk, A. (2001). School instructional program coherence: Benefits and challenges. Chicago, IL: Consortium on Chicago School Research.

1. **<u>What</u> is a scope & sequence?**
   A scope & sequence is a PreK-12 alignment of curricula and the associated intended student learning outcomes within each content area. Scope & sequences are constructed by grade level, and may specify sequencing in units of time, such as monthly, quarterly or by semester. Scope & sequence is one component of instructional program coherence. A scope & sequence is often a concise document that publicly describes the intended learning outcomes for all students within a given content area and timeframe.

2. **<u>Why</u> establish a scope & sequence?**
   The purpose of establishing content-specific scope & sequence in MMSD is to ensure research-based, high quality curriculum, instruction and assessment regardless of the school a student attends. Scope and sequence also supports students who move from school to school assuring they do not miss units of study. A scope & sequence allows effective use of resources to support student learning. It also provides a basis to ground and develop educational programs and initiatives throughout a PreK-12 system.

3. **<u>What</u> is the research evidence supporting a scope & sequence?**
   Evidence for the benefits of instructional program coherence comes from multiple sources, including research on learning and cognition, human motivation, and school-level effectiveness (Oxley, Principal's Research Review, 2008). School improvement frameworks that incorporate instructional program coherence are more likely to advance student achievement than multiple, unrelated efforts. Research has presented a strong positive relationship between improving coherence and improved student achievement (equivalent to about one month more schooling per year). Findings from research on effective middle schools have determined that the single strategy with the greatest predictive strength of improving student achievement is "an intense, school-wide focus on improving academic outcomes." The predictive value is based on domains including standards-based curricula and instruction (Education Digest, 2010).

4. **<u>Which</u> content areas will begin establishing a scope & sequence, and what are the first steps?**
   The content areas of English/Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics will begin in 2011-12. Improved student literacy, [literacy defined as reading and writing] will be addressed and articulated in all content areas. MMSD Social Emotional Learning Standards (SELS) will be integrated into the core content areas beginning with social studies and English/Language Arts/Literacy. The roll out of this information is based on a time line that is being established to include development of the scope and sequence with an electronic format, professional development, resources needed etc.

5. **<u>How</u> will other content areas be included in this process?**
   The rationale for scope & sequence addresses all content areas.
   In the long term - As each content area progresses through the MMSD Program Evaluation Protocol and the Curricular Renewal Cycle, opportunities for establishing a scope & sequence will be included.
   In the short term – Collaborative, school-based and district-based leadership teams are encouraged to explore ways to strengthen student learning through alignment. The electronic mapping of scope & sequence allows for access to content area essential understandings including instructional timeframes. All content areas are encouraged to align specific knowledge and skills to integrate with, extend, deepen and enrich student learning experiences within and across disciplines.

6. **<u>Who</u> will develop content-specific scope & sequence?**
   Scope & sequence teams include representation from PreK-12 teachers within schools, school-based leadership, and central office departments. The administrative leadership includes the Deputy

Superintendent, Assistant Superintendents, Curriculum and Assessment, Equity and Family Involvement, Talented and Gifted, Professional Development, ESL/Dual Language Immersion/Bilingual, Special Education, and Student Services.

7. **How will MMSD establish content-specific scope & sequence?**
The above teams will engage in professional learning by collaborating so that a clear district direction is consistent to align the essential understandings, essential questions, knowledge, skills and level of knowledge and skills using the Common Core State Standards and the ACT College & Career Readiness Standards. The process will begin from grade 12 and "back-map" to kindergarten and PreK. The work will be housed in an electronic format called Eclipse. The work will include professional development to learn about scope & sequence, standards, Eclipse and the process. Instructional timeframes will be included in all scope & sequences.

8. **How will MMSD coordinate the overall scope & sequence work?**
Central office, cross-departmental planning teams will meet on a regular basis to ensure the development of scope & sequence *across and within* content areas proceeds toward overall instructional program coherence.

9. **When will content-specific scope & sequence work begin?**
Scope & sequence teams for English/Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics will be formed by the beginning of 2011-2012.

10. **When will content-specific scope & sequence work be finished?**
Effective scope & sequence work is an ongoing and iterative process. Formalized opportunities to renew and reflect upon scope & sequence are included as components of the MMSD Program Evaluation Protocol. An initial draft of the scope & sequence for English/Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics will be completed by the end of summer, 2012. An initial draft for science and social studies is estimated to be finished by end of summer, 2013.

11. **What tools and resources are available? Funding?**
The following are some of the tools, resources and funding that will be provided for the districtwide scope & sequence teams:
   - Eclipse – electronic scope and sequence mapping tool
   - Align by Design – A process used to align essential understandings, essential questions, knowledge and skill level expectations
   - *Keys to Curriculum Mapping: Strategies and Tools to Make it Work* (Udelhofen, 2005)
   - Susan Udelhofen, national curriculum mapping expert
   - Common Core State Standards (hard copy and online)
   - ACT College & Career Readiness Standards
   - MMSD Social Emotional Learning Standards (SELS)
   - Alignment document that connects the Common Core with the ACT College & Career Readiness Standards
   - Content specific documents (e.g. *Atlas of Science Literacy*)
   - Scope & Sequence Exemplars (in development)
   - Released days (substitute coverage)
   - Extended employment for summer work

   School-based teams will have access to professional collaboration time and support from School Improvement Planning and REaL Grant funding.

12. **Will *current* curriculum, assessments, and benchmarks be aligned to the Common Core and ACT College & Career Readiness Standards?**
Exemplary courses and promising curricula and assessments that exist in MMSD will be considered. Current core courses and curriculum considered for the future will be measured against the ACT College & Career Readiness and Common Core Standards.

13. Will alignment of _new_ curriculum, assessments and benchmarks to the College & Career Readiness Standards be used?
This model offers a fresh start for some curricular and instructional renewal to the new Common Core and ACT College & Career Readiness Standards while implementing the Strategic Plan for increased rigor.

14. Will core curriculum be consistent in all classrooms by grade level?
Eventually, the essential understandings, essential questions, knowledge and skill level expectations will be consistent in all classrooms and by grade level districtwide.

15. In elementary schools will multi-age curriculum rotation become consistent?
For full alignment and to address the mobility of students in PreK-5, multi-age curriculum needs to be aligned districtwide. A plan for consistent A/B rotation will be forthcoming.

16. Will common curricula, curricular materials, core texts and assessments all become aligned?
Ideally. The MMSD Program Evaluation Protocol and Curricular Renewal Cycle approved by the Board of Education implies that consistent curricula are used districtwide. The Math Task Force Recommendations are also explicit on this topic. However, in the development of the High School Plan, we are asking all four high schools to make recommendations on common curricula, materials, core texts, and assessments to the Superintendent.

17. Will some common units be taught at the same time?
Sequential units with assessments can be synchronized and determined by the planning team. Mobility issues are addressed and learning loss is reduced when alignment is complete. Several school-based and district staff will determine what this looks like, while using an electronic template (Eclipse) for consistency.

18. Will all schools offer the same sequence of core courses required for graduation in the same grade level at 9th and 10th grades?
In order to provide students with the consistent essential understandings, knowledge and skill level expectations, a common sequencing of required courses for graduation will be reviewed.

19. Will teachers have the flexibility over their daily instruction (lesson plans, learning activities, supplemental resources)?
Within the parameters of a scope & sequence, teachers will be able to effectively differentiate in order to meet the needs of students in the classrooms. Eclipse will eventually house tools and resources to assist teachers in this process.

20. Will all students experience the same sequence of courses?
With the release of the High School College & Career Readiness Plan, the majority of students will experience a common sequence of courses with similar essential understandings. However, this plan does not restrict students from choosing other learning options to gain required credits for graduation.

21. Is the goal to have PreK-5, PreK-8, or PreK-12 alignment?
The goal is to have alignment PreK-12. A core characteristic of the most effective schools is that they have instructional program coherence. All schools will align to a PreK-12 program of instruction over time as a result of the development of scope & sequence and the program review and evaluation process.

22. Will curriculum sequential units be defined and consistent across classrooms and schools?
Scope and sequence includes appropriate time elements (ie: in 2nd grade learning how to tell time will be a lesson covered within the unit taught in October). Without time markers, a scope and sequence has jeopardized accountability, ability to integrate units, and implement cross-disciplinary connections.

23. **Will accountability for teachers and administrators/principals to follow and adhere to a scope & sequence be incorporated into report cards, evaluations, department goals, etc.?**
This is a district core systems response to closing the achievement gap and ensuring all students receive a research-based, high quality, rigorous, college and career ready education regardless of the school they attend in MMSD. Processes have not been developed to answer accountability of this non-negotiable.

24. **Should a comprehensive plan, including research base, outcomes by year, cost and implications be written and reviewed prior to beginning this work?**
Administrators from various departments are in the process of developing a template with initial information for consideration.

25. **Who is responsible for developing such a plan?**
District Executive Directors, Directors, Assistant Superintendents, and Deputy Superintendent are responsible for developing an initial draft action plan to begin to work with districtwide.

26. **Will the alignment process have implications on teacher positions due to certification?**
Some issues may arise as a result of aligning secondary-level courses. Issues will be resolved so that all teacher positions and certification are in accordance with the Department of Public Instruction teacher certification criteria.

27. **Will conversation with the union be part of the plan?**
Dialogue with the union may include: Professional Collaboration Time (PCT), research base, planning time, team time, ongoing professional development to learn new curriculum skills (curriculum, assessments, technology), need for alignment, and accountability for student learning through curricular alignment and progress monitoring.

28. **How will the alignment process be rolled out?**
The tentative plan is as follows:
- Central office staff and building administrators will convene regularly to develop, review and evaluate progress
- Teachers, department chairpersons, building leaders, and central office staff will convene regularly to develop, review and evaluate progress
- School-based discussions and regular communication will occur
- Middle schools and high schools will engage in 6-12 dialogue for transition
- K-5 and middle schools will engage in K-8 dialogue for transition
- K-12 discussions will occur to ensure continuity of instructional coherence

29. **After the alignment plan is completed, with stakeholder input, how might concerns be addressed?**
The plan calls for communication, professional development, collaboration and evaluation as components to the alignment process. In addition, school-based plans will also include making sure the following are explored:
- A clearly articulated vision to eliminate confusion
- A process for professional development to assure new skill development to eliminate anxiety
- Availability of necessary resources (e.g. sub release time) and redeployment of resources to eliminate inefficiencies (ordering in large quantities has cost benefits)
- Utilize incentives to the change process to eliminate gradual change, and
- District Action Plan to eliminate false starts.

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MMSD Strategic Plan

★ **INSTRUCTIONAL FRAMEWORK**
★ **SIP PROCESS**   ★ **STANDARDS**

Planning and Implementation Through:
Identified School Support Needs
Identified Central Office Services of Support

PreK-12 Alignment
•Curriculum• Assessments•
• Instructional Practices•
•Scope and Sequence•
•Supporting Programs•

Professional Development
Supports:
Capacity Building
Cluster Support Teams
Instructional Rounds, etc

Data Analysis
Key Performance Measures
Balanced Assessment System
Accountability
Data Dashboard
Common Assessments:
(EPAs, MAP, PLAA, PMA, etc)

5 Dimensions of Teaching and Learning
Version 3.0

University *of* Washington
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5D	Sub-Dimension	The Vision	Guiding Questions
Purpose	Standards	• The lesson is based on standard(s) that are meaningful and relevant beyond the task at hand (e.g., relate to a broader purpose or context such as problem-solving, citizenship, etc.), and help students learn and apply transferable knowledge and skills. • The lesson is intentionally linked to other lessons (previous and future) in support of students meeting standard(s).	• How do the standard and teaching point relate to content knowledge, habits of thinking in the discipline, transferable skills, and students' assessed needs as learners (re: language, culture, learning styles, etc.)? • How do the standard and teaching point relate to the ongoing work of this classroom? To the intellectual lives of students beyond this classroom? To broader ideals such as problem-solving, citizenship, etc.?
Purpose	Teaching Point	• The teaching point is based on knowledge of students' learning needs in relation to standard(s). • The teaching point is clearly articulated, linked to standard(s), embedded in instruction, and understood by students. • The teaching point is measurable. The criteria for success are clear to students and the performance tasks provide evidence that students are able to understand and apply learning in context.	• What is the teaching point of the lesson? How is it meaningful and relevant beyond the specific task/activity? • Is the task/activity aligned with the teaching point? How does what students are actually engaged in doing help them to achieve the desired outcome(s)? • How are the standard and teaching point communicated and made accessible to all students? • How do students communicate their understanding about what they are learning and why they are learning it? • What will students know and be able to do as a result of the lesson? What will be acceptable evidence of student learning?
Student Engagement	Intellectual Work	• Students' classroom work embodies substantive intellectual engagement (reading, thinking, writing, problem-solving, and meaning-making). • Students take ownership of their learning to develop, test, and refine their thinking.	• What is the frequency of teacher talk, teacher-initiated questions, student-initiated questions, student-to-student interaction, student presentation of work, etc.? • What does student talk reveal about the nature of students' thinking? • Where is the locus of control over learning in the classroom?
Student Engagement	Engagement Strategies	• Engagement strategies capitalize on and build upon students' background knowledge, experience and responses to support rigorous and culturally relevant learning. • Engagement strategies encourage equitable and purposeful student participation and ensure that all students have access to, and are expected to participate in, learning.	• What evidence do you observe of student engagement in intellectual, academic work? What is the nature of that work? • What is the level and quality of the intellectual work in which students are engaged (e.g. factual recall, procedure, inference, analysis, meta-cognition)? • What specific strategies and structures are in place to facilitate participation and meaning-making by all students (e.g. small group work, partner talk, writing, etc.)?
Student Engagement	Talk	• Student talk reflects discipline-specific habits of thinking and ways of communicating. • Student talk embodies substantive and intellectual thinking.	• Do all students have access to participation in the work of the group? Why/why not? How is participation distributed? • What questions, statements, and actions does the teacher use to encourage students to share their thinking with each other, to build on each other's ideas, and to assess their understanding of each other's ideas?

5D	Sub-Dimension	The Vision	Guiding Questions
Curriculum & Pedagogy	Curriculum	• Instructional materials (e.g., texts, resources, etc.) and tasks are appropriately challenging and supportive for all students, are aligned with the teaching point and content area standards, and are culturally and academically relevant. • The lesson materials and tasks are related to a larger unit and to the sequence and development of conceptual understanding over time.	• How does the learning in the classroom reflect authentic ways of reading, writing, thinking and reasoning in the discipline under study? (e.g., How does the work reflect what mathematicians do and how they think?) • How does the content of the lesson (e.g., text or task) influence the intellectual demand (e.g., the thinking and reasoning required)?
	Teaching Approaches and/or Strategies	• The teacher makes decisions and utilizes instructional approaches in ways that intentionally support his/her instructional purposes. • Instruction reflects and is consistent with pedagogical content knowledge and is culturally responsive, in order to engage students in disciplinary habits of thinking.	• How do lesson content and instructional strategies provide all students with access to the intellectual work and to participation in sense-making? • What does the instruction reveal about the teacher's understanding of how students learn, of disciplinary habits of thinking, and of content knowledge?
	Scaffolds for Learning	• The teacher's use of instructional approaches balances the interplay of explicit teaching scaffolding for the gradual release of responsibility and for student choice/ownership. • The teacher uses different instructional strategies, based on planned and/or in-the-moment decisions, to address individual learning needs.	• How is students' learning of content and transferable skills supported through the teacher's intentional use of instructional strategies and materials? • How does the teacher differentiate instruction for students with different learning needs?
Assessment for Student Learning	Assessment	• Students are able to assess their own learning in relation to the teaching point. • The teacher creates multiple assessment opportunities and expects all students to demonstrate learning. • Assessment methods include a variety of tools and approaches to gather comprehensive and quality information about the learning styles and needs of each student (e.g., anecdotal notes, conferring, student work samples, etc.) • The teacher uses observable systems and routines for recording and using student assessment data (e.g., charts, conferring records, portfolios, rubrics). • Assessment criteria, methods, and purposes are transparent and students have a role in their own assessment to promote learning.	• How does the instruction provide opportunities for all students to demonstrate learning? How does the teacher capitalize on those opportunities for the purposes of assessment? • How does the teacher gather information about student learning? How comprehensive are the sources of data from which he/she draws? • How does the teacher's understanding of each student as a learner inform how the teacher pushes for depth and stretches boundaries of student thinking? • How does assessment help students to become more meta-cognitive and to have ownership in their learning?
	Adjustment	• The teacher plans instruction based on ongoing assessment and an understanding of students, standards, texts, tasks, and pedagogical content knowledge. • The teacher makes in-the-moment instructional adjustments based upon student understanding.	• How does the teacher's instruction reflect planning for assessment? • How does assessment inform the teacher's instruction and decision-making? • How does the teacher adjust instruction based on in-the-moment assessment of student understanding?
Classroom Environment & Culture	Use of Physical Environment	• The physical arrangement of the room (e.g., meeting area, resources, student seating, etc.) is conducive to student learning. • The teacher uses the physical space of the classroom to assess student understanding and support learning (e.g., teacher moves around the room to observe and confer with students). • Students have access to resources in the physical environment to support learning and independence (e.g., libraries, materials, charts, technology, etc.).	• How does the physical arrangement of the classroom, as well as the availability of resources and space to both the teacher and students, purposefully support and scaffold student learning? • How and to what extent do the systems and routines of the classroom facilitate student ownership and independence? • How and to what extent do the systems and routines of the classroom reflect values of community, inclusivity, equity, and accountability for learning?
	Classroom Routines and Rituals	• Classroom systems and routines facilitate student responsibility, ownership and independence. • Available time is maximized in service of learning.	• What is the climate for learning in this classroom? How do relationships (teacher-student, student-student) support or hinder student learning?
	Classroom Culture	• Classroom discourse and interactions reflect high expectations and beliefs about all students' intellectual capabilities and create a culture of inclusivity, equity and accountability for learning. • Classroom norms encourage risk-taking, collaboration and respect for think...	• What do discourse and interactions reveal about what is valued in this classroom? • What are sources of status and authority in this classroom (e.g., reasoning and justification, intellectual risk-taking, popularity, aggressiveness, etc.)?

MADISON METROPOLITAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

545   West   Dayton   St.   ●   Madison,   Wisconsin   53703-1995   ▓   608.663-1607   ▼   www.mmsd.org

Daniel A. Nerad, *Superintendent of Schools*

DATE: March 9, 2011

TO: Board of Education

FROM: Daniel A. Nerad, Superintendent

RE: The Ideal MMSD Graduate

I.   Introduction

A.   **Title/topic:** The Ideal MMSD Graduate

B.   **Presenter/contact person:**
Phil Hubble, Program Support for School Counselors

C.   **Background information:**
The Strategic Plan calls for the district to define the ideal graduate. During the first semester of 2010-11, members of the MMSD staff, current students, and parents of current students were asked to respond to the question, "What should the ideal MMSD graduate know and be able to do?" This presentation is a summary of the responses from all groups.

D.   **BOE action requested:** None at this time.

II.   Summary of Current Information

A.   **Provide summary:**

The first attachment is a chart showing how the titles of various outcome areas defined for the ideal MMSD graduate in the Strategic Plan were modified to allow them to more closely match terms used in various programs and initiatives currently under way in the district. This enables staff to see more clearly the relationship between the Strategic Plan and programs and initiatives in which they already are involved.

The second attachment is a general summary of the information collected from interviews of MMSD staff, current students, and parents of current students in answer to the question, "What should the ideal MMSD graduate know and be able to do?" Responses are grouped by the outcome area to which they are related.

B.   **Recommendations and/or alternative recommendation(s):** N/A

C.   **Link to supporting detail:** N/A

III. Implications

    A.   **Budget: N/A**

    B.   **Strategic Plan:**

This represents Action Step 1 in the Student Action Plan—Achievement for All Students. Action Step 1 calls for defining successful MMSD graduate outcomes in five areas, which have been renamed and modified into four areas that more clearly align with work currently underway in the district.

    C.   **Equity Plan:**

All Action Steps in the Student Action Plan aim to provide appropriate support for each student so that the student reaches his/her highest potential. The general definition of the ideal MMSD graduate in Action Step 1 calls for specific responses by the district in Actions Steps 2-6. These more specific responses will be related to the Equity Plan as district staff ensure that the responses are developed in a manner that is culturally relevant.

    D.   **Implications for other aspects of the organization:**

By itself the general definition of successful outcomes for the ideal MMSD graduate has no implication for other aspects of the organization. However as Actions Steps 2-6 are undertaken, we expect that both general and specific implications for all aspects of the district's operation will become evident.

IV. Supporting Documentation

    A.   Existing: "Ideal MMSD Graduate—Responses from Various Groups", an Excel chart listing the responses from the various groups by outcome areas.

    B.   In preparation: A narrative explanation of the process used to obtain responses to the question "What should the Ideal MMSD graduate know and be able to do?" and of the responses in each outcome area.

The Ideal MMSD Graduate: Summary Statement

When asked to define the ideal MMSD graduate, staff, students, and parents/guardians responded that the idea graduate...

1. (Academic Achievement) ...has successfully completed a comprehensive education which includes

    a. completion of all courses required for graduation,
    b. completion of courses in World Languages, Fine Arts, and Career and Technical Education,
    c. participation in appropriate educational activities in the community.

2. (Social/Emotional Wellness) ...possesses the skills necessary to be in charge of his/her own life, which include

    a. competence in daily-living tasks such as housekeeping and food preparation,
    b. maintenance of healthy personal relationships,
    c. ability to interact successfully in diverse situations with people from diverse backgrounds,
    d. development and management of a personal-wellness plan that encompasses both physical and mental health,
    e. development and management of a personal-finance plan,
    f. efficiency and effectiveness in the use of computers and other technology.

3. (Post-High-School Planning) ...is prepared for appropriate post-high-school options, as evidenced by

    a. development and management of a career plan in which he/she identifies options matching his/her personal qualities with the realities of the world of work,
    b. appropriate preparation for successful entry into and completion of the post-high-school training/education required for the career option(s) which interest him/her most,

4. (Community Involvement) ...understands democracy and the U. S. system of government, and is aware of the importance of personally taking an active part in both by

    a. being involved in community service,
    b. staying informed regarding social and political issues,
    c. voting regularly in local, state, and federal elections

5. (Community Involvement) ...comprehends that the U. S. is part of the larger global society, as evidenced by

    a. being aware of global issues,
    b. demonstration of knowledge about and acceptance of other cultures and the ways in which they approach life.

Ideal MMSD Graduate: Outcome Areas

"Original Title" refers to the title used in the MMSD Strategic Plan for one area of the Ideal MMSD Graduate. "Modified Title" refers to a title given to that area which matches programs or initiatives currently in operation within the district. The modifications assist district staff in seeing the connection between the Strategic Plan and these current programs or initiatives.

Original Title	Modified Title	Abbreviation
Content knowledge	Academic Achievement	AA
Civic-minded skills	Community Involvement	CI
Life-enriching skills	Social/Emotional Wellness	SEW
Social-emotional skills		
Career awareness	Post-High-School Planning	PP

BOE
Pre K Scope and Sequence:

SUMMER SCHOOL:

Rationale and Vision

The role of Early and Extended Learning is critical to closing the achievement gap and preparing all students for the 21st Century. Research tells us that over 50% of the achievement gap between lower and higher income students is directly related to unequal learning opportunities over the summer (Alexander et al., 2007). Extended Learning Summer School (ELSS) is a valuable time for students to receive extra practice and learning in academic areas for accelerated learning (remediation) or to receive enrichment opportunities. The following are examples of the role that Extended Learning plays in the MMSD Strategic Plan to close the achievement gap: (1) increase student participation in advanced placement classes by providing early and extended learning opportunities, (2) provide increased time and opportunity for Response to Intervention (RTI), (3) increase post-secondary transition outcomes for students through extended supported employment, (4) increase high school credit attainment and graduation rates, (5) increase student scores at the proficient level on standards based grades and indirectly make a positive impact on student climate surveys, (6) use extended learning as a time to recruit new teachers and administrators, particularly those with diverse race and cultural backgrounds. Early and Extended Learning opportunities play a critical role in preparing and providing additional practices to learn these key skills for school success and engagement within the MMSD strategic plan (Dede, 2008).

The vision for ELSS is to increase achievement for all students by providing extended learning, effective interventions, and enrichment opportunities (Cooper, 1996). The morning program would be at neighborhood schools and include a healthy breakfast and lunch with highly qualified teachers offering accelerated and engaging instruction in small class settings to prevent academic skill loss. In the afternoon, high interest recreational and enrichment activities (e.g., MSCR) would be provided to enhance engagement (Downey et. al., 2004; Duffett et. al., 2004). Summer school would be similar to the school year with academic offerings EC-12 for acceleration, enrichment, ESY, integrated employment support, and on-line learning. Research based practices and interventions would be utilized to increase opportunities for learning and to enhance student achievement across the district (Odden & Archibald, 2008). Students with disabilities and English Language Learners would have access to core curriculum via Universal Design for Learning (UDL) along with non-disabled peers.

The ELSS should be open to all students, especially those with few summer options. Students would be identified in three ways: (1) flagged due to academic low performance or retention, (2) have an ESY IEP, and (3) interest and application for enrichment. Summer school offerings for students who struggle would consist of acceleration, credit recovery and extra time to learn specific content area(s). Higher achieving students would have opportunities for enrichment with curriculum appropriately differentiated to provide rigor. The goal of summer school for all students would be to prevent learning losses over the summer, while also increasing academic skills to prepare students for the next instructional level.

The following would be indicators to measure the success of the district's summer school program: (1) standards-based summer school report cards, (2) summer attendance, (3) increased student academic achievement as measured by the WKCE, ACT, etc. (4), increased participation in MSCR programs, (5) summer school survey data, (6) over time decreased rate of referrals for special education and increased use of RTI, (7) and progress monitoring system data (e.g., MAP, EPAS).

Vision Summary
- Inclusive programming for special education and English Language Learners (ELLs)
- Similar to the regular school year, 5th quarter of instruction
- UDL and differentiation along with behavioral support into the general classroom
- Identify student groups who have been denied access to ELSS (e.g., students with ME grade)
- Ensure high quality instruction and programming
- Increase Play and Learn and K-Ready
- Increase enrichment options

2010 Enrollment K-8
- Academic: 2,600 students
- Enrichment: 600

2011 Enrollment K-8 Projection
- Academic: 3,400
- Enrichment: 800

Dates/Schedule (K-8)
- 5 days per week; June 20-July 29, 2011; 6 weeks
- Daily: 8:00-12:00 classroom academics (math, literacy, PBS) and enrichment; 12:00-4:00 lunch and MSCR academic programming
- Schedule Notes: Can count 4.5 hours per day per student for reimbursement at .4

Service Delivery
- Students with disabilities who receive ESY and those without ESY services would be served by special education teachers or SEAs integrated into regular education classes whenever possible. Curriculum would be differentiated for students and team taught.
- English Language Learners (ELLs) who receive ESL services would be integrated into classrooms with BRS and ESL/BRT support. Curriculum would be differentiated for students and team taught.
- Support for the service delivery model would come from PBS course/infusion and coach along with PST and PBST in some cases, along with each class starting with morning meetings on behavior expectations and foreshadowing activities for the day from Responsive Classrooms and Developmental Designs. PBS levels of support are the following:
  Tier I. PBS homeroom or infused in math and literacy
  Tier II. Intervention group of students
  Tier III. Special Education and PBST targeted support
- Professional development would be needed for PBS and effects of trauma on classroom learning

High Impact Options K-8 with Increased Projections
1. If we drop ME in K-5, there would be 350 more students invited to ELSS (* grade at middle school is not an issue)

2. Behavior criteria – 467 students in 2010 qualified for ELSS, but had behavior issues and were not invited to attend

3. Intensive reading interventions

4. ESL/Bilingual and Dual Language Immersion (DLI) projections based on removing English language criteria and oral proficiency requirements
   - ESL/Bilingual = additional 125 invited to ELSS
   - DLI = additional 134 invited to ELSS

5. Enrichment – increase offerings, provide consistency across city and at each ELSS site

6. Promotion – increase awareness for special education students

ELSS Outcomes
1. Decrease achievement gap
2. Increase RTI practices
3. Increase enrichment offerings at under-served sites
4. Increase academic offerings for students who have not participated in the past
5. Integrate programs more to include English Language Learners and students with disabilities
6. Increase student academic achievement (e.g., grades)
7. Increase the number of schools that meet annual yearly progress (AYP) under no child left behind based on academic achievement tests (e.g., WKCE, ACT, elementary reading assessment, Diebels)
8. Decreased referrals to special education
9. Enable school to reach School Improvement Plan (SIP) goals

Measuring the Effectiveness of ELSS
1. Student grades for summer school
2. Pre- and post-test data
3. Student Attendance data
4. Student take the MAP assessment for grades 3-8 and the EPAS for grades K-2
5. Standardized test scores for ACT, WKCE, Reading, Kindergarten screener
6. Inclusion data for the number of students with disabilities and English Language Learners who are included in the general classroom
7. Attainment of strategic plan goals based on global district data

Considerations for New Model:
1. Budget options for increase based on different student enrollment increases

2. Instructional Resource Teachers (IRTs) + Program Support Teacher (PST) consult to sites fund to be available

3. Bilingual Resource Specialists (BRS) and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBS) coaches to implement model, and Positive Behavior Support Team (PBST) support and consultation for students.

4. With increased sites (up to two, one each side of city (e.g., East/West)), increased administrative interns

5. Professional development needs for co-teaching, collaboration, differentiation, and PBS, UDL, etc. Utilize trained PBS coaches.

6. Need schedule to rotate school sites in order to provide one year off for a school.

7. More beneficial to pay teachers more, recruit MMSD teachers vs. adding more PD days and funds.

8. Offer PBS as part of course content in literacy and math

9. Enrichment: students who are recommended to attend ELSS can also attend an enrichment course before lunch if student is only taking math or literacy. Student/Parent can select top 3 enrichment offerings. If student's behavior is problematic during the enrichment 3-week session, the student will be moved to a PBS course for the remainder of that 3-week session. That student will get a fresh start in an enrichment class for the 2nd three weeks. Students who are not recommended for ELSS can still sign up through MSCR and take enrichment courses.

SATURDAY SCHOOL

Rationale:
The role of extended learning, Saturday programming is critical to closing the achievement gap and preparing all students for the 21st Century. Research indicates that over 50% of the achievement gap between lower and higher income students is directly related to unequal learning opportunities over the summer and weekends (Alexander et al., 2007). Weekend structured programs provide a valuable time for students to receive extra practice and learning in academic areas for accelerated learning and to receive enrichment opportunities.

Goal:
Provide an extended learning opportunity in primarily literacy and second math for students at schools who based on grades are not being successful in literacy for math.

This would be a formalized strategy to be used by schools that have not met AYP. This Saturday school concept is call ESET, extended Saturday enrichment and tutoring, provided during times when students have few opportunities on the weekends, such as during the winter months. The ESET program would allow students to access four hours of structured enrichment and tutoring in some cases at their home school.

Program Description:
Student selection:
students who are most in need and meet criteria in literacy and math would be invited to participate, but the program would be limited to 200 students in grades 5K-5th. If more than 200 students apply, a lottery would be held.

Some students due to academic or behavioral concern may be recommended by the principal to attend the program with parent support.

Schedule:
The program would run from January 30th-May 30th; 8:15-11:30 AM with breakfast provided at 8:15 and lunch at 11:15. The Saturday School schedule would consist of the following:

- 1 hour of literacy tutoring and instruction using afterschool CRESST report curriculum and "Mif" (if appropriate)
- 1 hour math tutoring and afterschool CRESST report curriculum
- 1 hour of positive behavior support (PBS) curriculum and enrichment activities consisting of student choice of art, gym time, read a book, and educational games and academic project based learning
- 1 hour for breakfast and lunch

Staff:
Could consist of school teachers, assistants, MSCR staff and out of district staff if needed.

Administrators at the sites could consist of interns similar to those used in summer school with one floating administrator or if sites have 200 students have an intern and also an administrator.

Program Organization:

The district would have Hubs in each attendance area, however this year 2011 start with just one site at Leopold with the following site for 2012:

a) West-Leopold (would be the first pilot site for consideration in 2011 with students 5K-5th from Leopold, Lincoln and Midvale)
b) Memorial-Falk
c) LaFollette-Glendale
d) East- Emerson

Outcomes:

Increased academic achievement for attending students in the areas of literacy and math skills along with school behavior and study skills. The program will enable students to gain extra skills during the weekend in order to receive additional instruction and practice on core curriculum areas of math, literacy and positive behavior.

Outcomes of the program would be provide additional time for RTI and reduce the achievement gap by offering both enrichment and additional learning time. Student academic levels will be measured by pre and post assessments using the Epas system. Students would start the program with a pre assessment to measure baseline skills, then students would be provided with a post test in May. Also, student grades would be reviewed to determine if grades increased in Math and literacy and school behavior. Participant and staff surveys would be completed along with monthly site walk through checklist to ensure program fidelity. Extended Learning opportunities like Saturday programs play a critical role in preparing and providing additional practices to learn these key skills for school success and engagement within the MMSD strategic plan (Dede, 2008).

Outcome Data Tracked:
Student who participate in the program will have grade tracking in literacy and math to measure achievement gains.

Timeline:

This project would start with one school site (Leopold) and be replicated to the 3 other schools attendance area sites the following year in 2012.

PRE-KINDERGARTEN OPTIONS:

The Department of Early & Extended Learning has developed a Pre-Kindergarten Opportunities Guide for parents, which is available on the Early & Extended Learning web site in English and Spanish:

http://deelweb.madison.k12.wi.us/files/deel/PreK_Opportunities_Directory.pdf

The Pre-Kindergarten Opportunities Guide is also provided to parents in a hard copy form at Child Find screening sessions, informational meetings and other venues see attached for actual guide.

AFTERSCHOOL MSCR ACADEMIC INFUSION AND ENRICHMENT

Primary Goals
- Extend student academic support beyond the school day, into after school hours, to increase student achievement and success in math and literacy
- Provide students with opportunities for learning and growth in self-direction, self-confidence, personal responsibility, building relationships, and leadership
- Provide after school staff members with quality lesson plans, activities, curriculum, and related materials, in an organized and sustainable manner (creation of MSCR After School Tool Kit), to support achievement of Goal 1

Curricular Resources

CRESST/SEDL Resource
- Use as a framework to build programming
- Linked to CLC grants
- MSCR After School staff have received training through CLC grant/DPI previously; specific training available
- MSCR currently has books/materials

Math Resources
- MMSD Elementary Math Notebook Games
- Math Games (recommended list obtained from MMSD math resource teachers) – standard list provided to each after school site
- Multicultural Math Games and Activities by Claudia Zaslavsky (under review for possible purchase)
- Spatial Temporal Math computer program pilot (fall 2011)
- Math Is Fun (MIF) program, developed by MMSD staff

Literacy Resources
- Book bags (from school day to after school)
- Writing notebooks
- Literacy Games (recommended list obtained from MMSD literacy resource teachers) – standard list provided to each after school site
- **Additional consideration – Reader's Theatre

Professional Development:

All MSCR Staff
- CRESST/SEDL Resource training – (Jan/Feb/Mar 2011)
- Math content training – Interventionists/IRTs (Spring 2011)
- Literacy content training – Interventionists/IRTs (Spring 2011)

After School Plan Timeline:

Principal Meetings
- January 12, 2011 – review current after school programming in district/inventory/problem solving
- February 9, 2011– share overall MSCR after school plan for student support and professional development with ten existing MSCR academic sites and other interested sites

Creation of MSCR After School Tool Kit
- December/January/February
  - CRESST/SEDL Resource Essentials
  - Math – MMSD Notebook games, MMSD staff approved board games, multicultural curriculum, Math Is Fun (MIF), Spatial/Temporal Math pilot (Fall 2011)
  - Literacy – components of plan: leveled book bags, writing notebooks, literacy games. **Additional consideration – Reader's Theatre
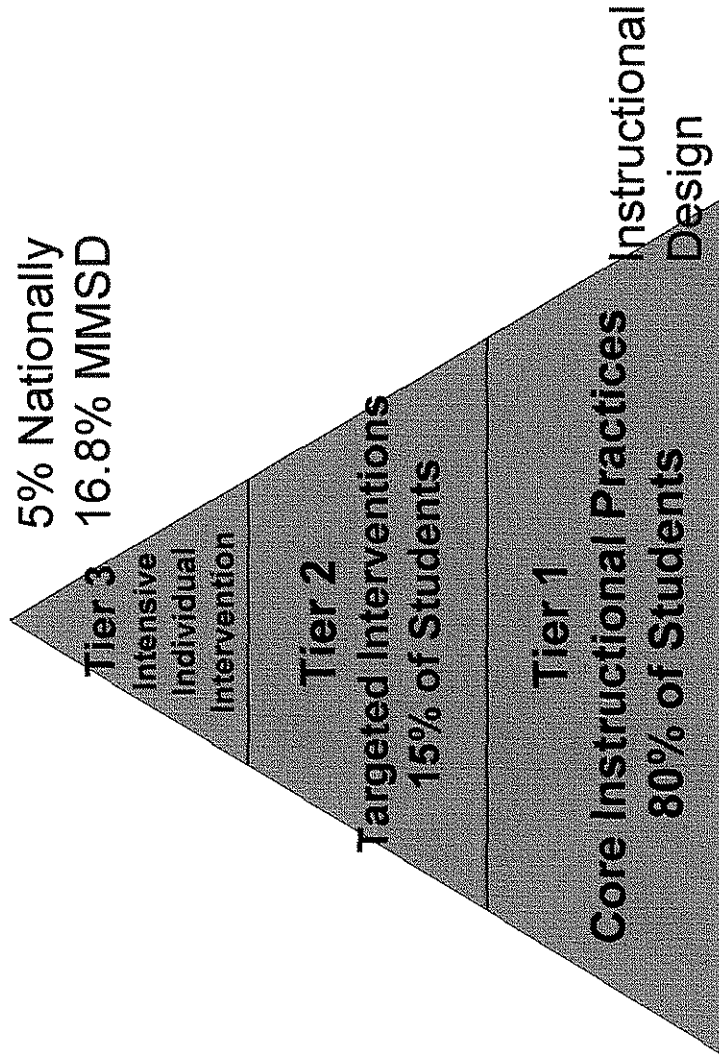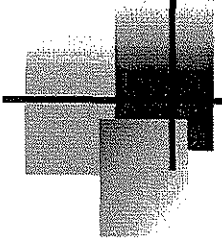
Professional Development Plan
- All MSCR staff attend CRESST/SEDL Resource training (Jan/Feb/Mar 2011)
- Math content focus – IRT/Interventionists (Spring 2011)
- Literacy content focus – IRT/Interventionists (Spring 2011)

Response to Intervention

5% Nationally
16.8% MMSD

Tier 3
Intensive
Individual
Intervention

Tier 2
Targeted Interventions
15% of Students

Tier 1
Core Instructional Practices
80% of Students

Instructional
Design

MADISON METROPOLITAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

March 21, 2011

TO: Board of Education

FROM: Daniel A. Nerad, Superintendent

RE: Individualized Learning Plan

I. Introduction

A. **Title/topic** – ILP (Individualized Learning Plan)

B. **Presenter/contact person** – Pam Nash and Kolleen Onsrud

C. **Background information** – The **Individual Learning Plans (ILP) K-12:** The Strategic Plan action steps identify ILPs for all grade levels. Elementary ILPs began in fall, 2010 as an action item in the Strategic Plan to provide parents and students with year-long goals to support college and career readiness thinking at the very beginning of one's education. The concept is, "What should be the goal/s for my child this year?" Results of first year ILP implementation survey to parents and teachers indicated that teachers have less satisfaction of the benefits of the ILP and some have chosen not to implement the new initiative. Parents however found the tool beneficial to understanding the direction of their child for that grade. A committee has been formed (K-5) to make recommendations for better implementation of the process and accountability in the future.

Career Cruising: All middle and high schools will adopt the 9th grade Career Cruising Individual Learning Plan in spring, 2011. The district goal is to begin in 6th grade at the middle schools and additional high school grade levels, following the 9th grade implementation process, as the professional development becomes available for staff and students.

D. **BOE action requested** – Information only

II. Summary of Current Information

A. **Provide summary** – Summary of the Individualized Learning Plan
(As prepared by the ILP steering committee)

GOAL: Success for all MMSD students and teachers.
Success is defined as *the achievement of something desired and planned.*
As a steering committee, our desire and plan is to promote a strategic
hub of **principles, learning standards, skills** and **activities** that connect, support and sustain all students and school professionals, in order to maximize students' K-12 success and help them and school staff identify and achieve their personal, civic and work aspirations.

Our conclusions and, therefore, our starting points:

➢ The Madison community has expectations for schools to offer customized learning experiences and personalized educational programming.

➢ Individualized Learning Plans are "shovel-ready" tools by which the district can accomplish much of its strategic plan.

➢ Individualized Learning Plans are at the hub of the district's REaL commitment to relationships, engagement and learning.

➢ The REaL commitment is readily sustained through ILPs.

➢ ILPs, with several other considerations, share the strategic hub of the district's vision for student and staff success.

➢ The ILP documents academic achievement, career awareness and education, and life-management skills—the whole child.

➢ The ILP is a school-wide process in which all staff plays a crucial part, since all staff are involved in educating the whole child.

➢ The ILP helps staff consider students in holistic terms, and it helps staff consider their courses in the larger context of preparation for life.

Update: **Recent Developments:**

Between September and November, 2010, MMSD became aware in more detail than we had been previously of a career-and-college-planning program called Career Cruising. Close examination of Career Cruising revealed that it provides much of what MMSD and WISCareers had been working to develop. District staff and WISCareers staff worked together in an attempt to speed up the development and implementation of our joint ILP, but it became apparent that the process would necessarily take more time than MMSD could afford to wait. Therefore the district decided to change software vendors.

WISCareers will be available through the end of the 2010-2011 school year. Career Cruising is currently available as well. As of 2011-12, MMSD will use Career Cruising exclusively.

Current Status:

• Contacts have been identified for each middle school, high school, and secondary alternative program in the district (see "MMSD School/Program Contacts for Career Cruising").

• These contacts, or another staff member designated by the principal, will serve as the initial Career Cruising trainer for their school or program. With the exception of staff from four middle schools and all of the alternatives, these staff received training on 2/3/11 and will have an "open lab" follow-up session on 2/18/11.

- Career Cruising has been linked to Infinite Campus, and all students in grades 6-12 have Career Cruising accounts.

- A group of middle-school computer technology teachers and middle-school and high-school counselors have completed an initial draft of updates for the MMSD Grades 6-12 Career Competencies by replacing WISCareers activities with Career Cruising activities.

- The MMSD Strategic Plan calls for all freshmen to begin work on their ILP during the second semester of 2010-11. The same group of staff who updated the MMSD Career Competencies outlined a three-part process for high schools to use with freshmen this semester (see "9th Grade ILP for Spring 2010-11").

- This same group of staff suggested the initial configuration for the MMSD Portfolio Completion Standards, outlining the sections of the Career Cruising portfolio students are to complete in each grade.

B. **Recommendations**– To continue to support the planning and implementation of the ILP and the Career Crusing Guidance system as a way to develop student portfolios and to track student achievement.

C. **Link to supporting detail** – NA

III. Implications

A. **Budget** – None at this time. Money remains in budget to continue work with ILP steering team into the summer.

B. **Strategic Plan – Learning is enhanced when…**
   ☐ Expectations for achievement are clear
   ☐ Standards for performance are consistently high for all students
   ☐ The educational process reinforces the joy of learning
   ☐ The focus is child by child
   ☐ Schools help focus student effort around a demanding, research-based curriculum

C. **Equity Plan** – The equity plan identifies key factors needed to ensure equity for student success. These factors have provided insight into the development of the guiding principals and the process plan.

D. **Implications for other aspects of the organization** – Continuation of roll out k-12. Planning needs to begin at each level in order to expand the usage and understanding of the ILP and its potential.

IV. Supporting Documentation

A. Activities for March-June, 2011

B. ILP Portfolio Standards

MMSD ILP Activities: March–June, 2011

General	Elementary	Secondary School / Alternative Programs
MMSD will initiate discussions with MTI regarding the ILP.	MMSD will form an Elementary-School ILP Team to develop a plan for designing and implementing appropriate ILP activities at grades K-5, beginning in the fall of 2011-12.	All 9th-graders will begin the ILP during 2nd semester.
MMSD will make a decision about using the Docufied e-transcript module available from Career Cruising to send transcripts electronically starting in 2011-12.		The group of computer technology teachers and counselors will complete the update of the Grades 6-12 Career Competencies.
Staff in the alternative programs will receive training on Career Cruising.		These competencies will form the Career Development Curriculum, which middle- and high-school students will complete in each grade starting in the fall of 2011-12.
Memorial students will present "What If You Could…?" to the Board of Education, middle- and high-school principals, principals of the alternative programs, and the high-school Innovation Teams.		Middle-school trainers who have not attended a Career Cruising "Train the Trainers" session will receive training during an after-school session.
		Each middle school, high school, and alternative program will organize an ILP Team to coordinate their school's ILP work. Each ILP Team will select one member to serve on the MMSD Secondary-School ILP Team.
		Each school's ILP Team will develop a plan for that school to implement the Career Development Curriculum and the ILP, incorporating the district's expectations and the curriculum-implementation plan.
		The MMSD Secondary-School ILP Team will develop an overview of the MMSD ILP in grades 6-12, outlining the district's expectations of all schools for the ILP.
		The MMSD Secondary-School ILP Team will develop a curriculum-implementation plan for the district's Career Development Curriculum in each grade, 6-12, beginning in 2011-12.
		High school may want to develop an idea for some type of Freshman Transition Course. An excellent resource is The George Washington University's Freshman Transition Initiative, http://www.freshmantransition.org/index.php.
		Each middle school will ask for two additional staff beside the school's Career Cruising contact to volunteer to be trained on Career Cruising.
		Each high school will ask for three additional staff beside the school's Career Cruising contact to volunteer to be trained on Career Cruising.
		Each school trainers will plan and implement training for any additional staff in their school who wish to learn about Career Cruising.
		In March or April, MMSD will again work with Career Cruising to exchange data regarding high-school courses in preparation for MMSD's using the Course Planner module to … • provide students with a real-time monitor of their graduation status. • enable students to complete a 4-year course plan using courses available in their high school, • enable students to select courses for the next school year in their ILP and have those course selections automatically transfer into Infinite Campus for entry into each high school's master schedule.

Portfolio Completion Standards

Portfolio Completion Standards

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Criteria	Grade Level						
Career and Education Exploration	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Career Matchmaker	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
My Skills	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ability Profiler					Yes		
Learning Styles Inventory		Yes					
Other Assessments							
Careers of Interest	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
– Minimum	1	1	3	3	3	3	3
Career Selector					Yes	Yes	Yes
Schools of Interest						Yes	Yes
– Minimum						3	3
School Selector							
Financial Aid Selector							
Four Year Education Plan	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Education Plan: Grade 9			Yes				
– Minimum credits			0.0				
Education Plan: Grade 10				Yes			
– Minimum credits				0.0			
Education Plan: Grade 11					Yes		
– Minimum credits					0.0		
Education Plan: Grade 12						Yes	
– Minimum credits						0.0	
Career Planning	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Career Cluster / Pathway Selection				Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Career Planning Activities							
– Minimum							
Post-Secondary Plan							Yes
Career and Life Goals			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Activities and Abilities	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Extracurricular Activities	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
– Minimum	1	1	1	1	2	3	3
Hobbies & Interests	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
– Minimum	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Skills and Abilities	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
– Minimum	1	1	1	1	1	2	3
Awards and Certificates							
Work Experience							
Volunteer Experience							
– Minimum hours							
Annual Portfolio Development Activities	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Annual Portfolio Review							
Assignments & Activities	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Required Assignments & Activities							

What Does It Take for the District Central Office to Operate as a Learning Organization?

Meredith I. Honig

Many reformers suggest that urban district central offices would strengthen teaching and learning districtwide if they operated as "learning organizations." But what does it mean for a school district central office to operate as a learning organization? This article draws on research about learning theory and school district central offices to outline what central office administrators' work might involve if their offices functioned as learning organizations. Practices, in broad terms, include: (1) engaging in intensive assistance relationships with schools around teaching and learning improvement, and (2) continually using evidence from the assistance relationships and other sources to inform central office policies and practices that might strengthen teaching and learning improvements more broadly. This article defines these activities with evidence from research, discusses conditions that help or hinder these activities, and raises questions for practitioners to consider in the context of their own work.

Introduction

School district central office administrators face unprecedented demands to strengthen teaching and learning for all students districtwide. These demands pose striking challenges, especially for school district central offices that historically have focused mainly on operational not instructional issues and, following state and federal funding streams, on helping targeted groups of students reach basic minimum standards not assisting all students in reaching high standards (Hightower, Knapp, Marsh, & McLaughlin, 2002; Honig, 2006). Some educational reformers and researchers suggest that school district central offices would meet these demands if they operated as "learning organizations." Such calls conjure up compelling images of central offices as dynamic organizations engaged in continuous improvement to address student and school needs and strengths. But what specifically do school district central offices do when they operate as learning organizations?

This article draws on sociocultural and organizational learning theories to develop a research-based conceptualization of what central offices might do if they operated as "learning organizations." As applied to district central offices, these theories suggest that, when districts operate as learning organizations, central office administrators engage in two broad types of activities. For one, a subset of central office administrators participates in direct, hands-on assistance relationships with schools around teaching and learning improvement. These relationships are a far cry from some forms of school coaching that have permeated school districts in recent years and involve the provision of particular types of supports for strengthening school-level professional practice, including: focusing school principals, teachers, and others on the

Meredith I. Honig is Associate Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at the University of Washington, Seattle. Email mihonig@u.washington.edu. This article has been adapted with permission from the University of Chicago Press from the following publication: Honig, M.I. (2008). District central offices as learning organizations: How sociocultural and organizational learning theories elaborate district central office administrators' participation in teaching and learning improvement efforts. *American Journal of Education, 114.* Electronic copy published May 28, 2008. Many thanks to Irene Yoon for her assistance with the preparation of this version.

"joint work" of improving teaching and learning for all students; modeling professional practices consistent with such goals; developing and using tools, connecting principals to other principals, and brokering other resources all in support of teaching and learning improvement; and, throughout all those activities, engaging school principals and other school staff in challenging conversations about their own practice.

Second, other central office administrators do not simply carry out their central office functions as they have always performed them; rather, they continually collect lessons learned (from the assistance relationships and from other sources) and use that evidence to ground their day-to-day decisions. In these ways, all the operations of a central office become oriented to teaching and learning support.

Research on Central Offices as Learning Organizations

A number of organizations, reformers, and leaders have developed guides for districts on how to support districtwide teaching and learning improvements. These frameworks often stem from experience and good thinking about activities that seem consistent with strengthening teaching and learning for all students. Some are based on studies of districts that have posted districtwide learning gains and on assumptions that the superintendents' major policy decisions during that period had something to do with the learning gains (e.g., Snipes, Doolittle, & Herlihy, 2002; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). These frameworks often draw conclusions that make intuitive sense. For example, many call for stronger superintendent leadership and "coherent" or aligned instructional programs (e.g., Corcoran, Fuhrman, & Belcher, 2001; Elmore & Burney, 1997; Murphy & Hallinger, 1988; Snipes et al., 2002; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). However, few of these frameworks rest on research that directly links central office activities to gains in teaching and learning or to creating conditions that might foster such outcomes. Furthermore, with very few exceptions (e.g., Agullard & Goughnour, 2006), these frameworks do not penetrate into central offices— beyond superintendents and formal school board or school district policies—to elaborate what central office administrators other than superintendents do when they participate in teaching and learning improvement efforts. Such omissions are particularly striking in the context of mid-sized to large urban districts where those other central office administrators number in at least the hundreds.

To address these gaps in research, a small handful of researchers have begun to argue that when school district central offices create conditions that foster teaching and learning improvements, their central office administrators engage in their work from a learning stance. Their

studies draw on theories of learning in social settings to elaborate what this means. Some of these researchers use strands of "sociocultural learning theory" as the basis for their work (e.g., Burch & Spillane, 2004; Hubbard, Mehan, & Stein, 2006). A few others rely on theories of "organizational learning" from the fields of administration and management (e.g., Hannaway, 1989; Honig, 2003, 2004). In reviewing these studies, I have found that each of these two theories sheds different light on how central office administrators might participate in improving teaching and learning. Accordingly, I have brought ideas from both theories together to elaborate a research-based picture of district central offices as learning organizations as involving two broad sets of activities: engaging in particular kinds of assistance relationships with schools around teaching and learning improvement, mainly elaborated by sociocultural learning theory; and using evidence from those relationships and other sources to ground other central office decisions, activities mainly described in organizational learning theory.

Assistance Relationships for Teaching and Learning Improvement

Studies using sociocultural learning theory show that, across a variety of organizations and workplace settings, people deepen and improve their practice when they engage with others in assistance relationships. Given the range of empirical and theoretical support for such relationships, I hypothesize that school principals and teachers might improve their own practice and, in turn, teaching and learning within their schools if they were supported by school district central office administrators in such ongoing assistance relationships.

Overall, in these relationships, new knowledge is not delivered from one person to another, such as when a district central office distributes information to a school principal regarding how they should comply with particular forms of teacher evaluation or when a professional development session for principals mainly involves central office administrators telling principals how to implement a particular program. Rather, research on these relationships emphasize that people learn to improve their performance with particular work practice by engaging in those practices in real situations and receiving ongoing, real-time, differentiated, and job-embedded supports for deepening their engagement. Some educators might distinguish this approach as "learning by doing" as opposed to, for example, a "sit and get" style of professional development.

This research on learning moves beyond the general calls in many districts for more school coaching to elaborate specific features of assistance relationships that seem particularly powerful for improving various professionals' (e.g., teachers' and principals') practice. Namely,

these relationships engage participants in deepening their ability to demonstrate a particular set of work practices. Theorists sometimes call these work practices "joint work" to reflect that the work practices are of value or becoming valuable to all participants and a broader community in which they participate. These relationships involve at least one participant who, in service of the joint work: models particular ways of acting and thinking consistent with the new work practices; develops and uses tools and brokers other resources to help participants deepen their engagement in the work practices; "legitimizes peripheral participation" or recognizes that all participants are on a trajectory toward improving their performance and creates meaningful opportunities for all to participate in the joint work, however novice they may be; and creates various social opportunities for participants to grapple with new forms of work practice alongside others. These ideas are elaborated in the following subsections.

Supporting Engagement in "Joint Work"

"Joint work," a "joint enterprise," or an "authentic situation" is at the heart of learning assistance relationships (Brown, Collins, & Duguid 1989; Rogoff, 1994; Rogoff, Baker-Sennett, Lacasa, & Goldsmith, 1995; Wenger, 1998). Joint work refers to activities that participants and members of their broader community value. Thus, joint work typically is not a focus imposed on someone, such as when a district requires all elementary schools to adopt a particular reading program. Rather, what form of joint work should anchor the assistance relationship emerges through participants' negotiations about how they want to anchor their own activities and goals. Through such negotiations participants come to understand, value, and dedicate themselves to engaging in the new work practices at the heart of the joint work.

Research on school districts generally reinforces the importance of joint work by negative example. For example, Finnigan and O'Day (2003) showed how top-down central office mandates for schools to work with external organizations tended to yield disappointing results, in part, when such mandates failed to provide an opportunity for schools to participate in choosing their external partner or the focus of their work with the partner. As a positive example, my colleagues and I have observed how some district central offices have dedicated central office administrators to work with school principals one-on-one and in networks of multiple principals to improve their instructional leadership practice. When we associated their work with such improvements, the central office administrators initiated their assistance relationships with school principals by engaging each one in a series of challenging conversations using various data and other evidence to help principals make sense of why they should focus their own efforts on improving and otherwise valuing their own

instructional leadership practice. Furthermore, several central office administrators worked with their principals to identify a specific problem or practice to anchor their efforts to improve their instructional leadership over the course of the academic year. Such efforts seem consistent with the concept of focusing on joint work because the efforts aimed to focus the assistance relationship on issues that the principals and the central office administrators jointly valued and took responsible for engaging (Honig, Copland, Lorton, Rainey, & Newton, n.d; Honig, Lorton, & Copland, in press).

Modeling

Participants in assistance relationships help deepen others' engagement in particular forms of joint work by modeling or demonstrating how to think and act in ways consistent with those work practices (Brown & Campione, 1994; Tharp & Gallimore, 1991). When individuals have access to models, they are able to develop mental images of particular work practices prior to trying to execute them and on which they can call when they are in situations absent live models (Collins, Brown, & Hollum, 2003; see also Lave, 1996).

Models are particularly powerful supports for learning when participants in the assistance relationships—either the modelers or the others—employ metacognitive strategies of bringing "thinking to the surface" and of making thinking "visible" (Collins et al., 2003, p. 3; see also Lee, 2001). Such strategies involve calling participants' attention to the fact that a practice is being modeled, to increase their chance of noticing the model. Metacognitive strategies also include the engagement of participants in dialogue about what is being modeled and why a particular practice is being modeled in a certain way. Learning researchers have demonstrated that such efforts to clarify not only "the what" but also "the why" of particular activities enable deeper engagement in those activities than would be possible otherwise.

As one example of modeling using metacognitive strategies, my colleague and I chronicled how a facilitator of a professional development session led school principals and central office administrators in establishing norms to guide participants' engagement in the session (Honig & Ikemoto, 2008). During the process, the facilitator repeatedly reflected back to participants that she was engaging them in norm-setting (i.e., she called participants' attention to the practice she was modeling) because up-front agreements about norms can help facilitate the kinds of direct, honest, and sometimes difficult dialogue that analyzing professional practice requires; and that such strategies might be useful in future professional development sessions the central officers and school principals might run (i.e., she shared her rationale for modeling particular activities).

According to sociocultural learning theory, by making her think about norm-setting explicit, the facilitator was providing a more powerful model of how the participating administrators might engage in group norm-setting themselves than if she had simply led participants through norm-setting absent such metacognitive comments. Likewise, Angullard et al. (2007) have shown how sometimes teaching and learning improvement efforts produce disappointing results when district central office and school leaders operate with different underlying logics, theories, or rationales for particular reform approaches. Through metacognitive strategies, reform participants make such underlying assumptions explicit and help various professionals work together more effectively than they would if they left such assumptions unspoken.

Particularly powerful forms of modeling are also reciprocal. When modeling is reciprocal, the modeler carefully analyzes his or her engagements with others, and uses those analyses to transform their own participation (Tharp & Gallimore, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Such reciprocity infuses the relationship with value and legitimacy by demonstrating for participants that the relationship is important not only for, in this case, school staffs' learning, but central office administrators' learning as well.

Developing Tools

Assistance relationships involve not only people, but also materials that learning theorists call "tools" or "artifacts." Some district leaders and researchers use the labels "tools" and "artifacts" to refer to any printed materials. But sociocultural learning theory specifies that tools are particular kinds of materials—those that carry ideas and prompt action in ways that intentionally aim to leverage changes in how people think and what they do, as well as what they should not think or do (Wenger, 1998). In the process, tools do not simply prescribe what individuals should think or do but prompt tool users to grapple with what ways of thinking and acting might contribute to particular goals and, ultimately, guide how they actually think and act (Barley, 1986; Brown & Duguid, 1991). Such sense-making processes seem particularly important in many district settings where complex challenges of strengthening teaching and learning generally have defied prescription (e.g., Elmore, 1983; Shulman, 1983; see also Alexrod & Cohen, 2000).

All tools prompt thinking and action, but different tools may foreground either thinking or action to leverage changes in both. Conceptual tools emphasize engaging people in particular ideas to shift their thinking as a way to influence both their thinking and their actions. Practical tools foreground engaging people in particular actions as a primary strategy for influencing both thinking and acting (e.g., Wenger, 1998).

As an example of a conceptual tool, the Institute for Learning (IFL), mentioned earlier, has developed the Principles of Learning—nine statements of what powerful teaching and learning for all students involves. The IFL aims to engage district leaders in making sense of what these ideas mean and, in the process, to influence both their thinking about districtwide teaching and learning improvements and what actions might influence it in their settings (Honig & Ikemoto, 2006, 2008). As an example of a practical tool, leaders in New York City's Community School District #2 developed a protocol that district leaders in partnership with the IFL later elaborated as the "LearningWalk." The LearningWalk protocol guides principals and central office administrators through a process of observing classrooms and engaging each other and teachers in dialogue about their practice and how to improve it. By prompting particular actions, the LearningWalk aims to influence what people do as a strategy for also influencing how they think about teaching and learning improvements. Researchers have linked modest improvements in district capacity for supporting high-quality teaching and learning, in part, to these kinds of conceptual and practical tools (Hubbard et al., 2006).

Brokering/Boundary Spanning

Various other materials besides tools also support participants' engagement in assistance relationships that help deepen their professional practice. Accordingly, such assistance relationships are greatly enhanced when one or more participants engages in brokering or boundary spanning—strategically bringing new ideas, understandings, and other resources into the assistance relationships that may help participants realize their goals (Wenger, 1998). Importantly, brokers do not simply pass on those resources; they translate them into forms participants may be particularly likely to use to inform their own practice (Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Cobb & Bowers,1999; Dollinger, 1984; Tushman, 1977; Tushman & Katz, 1980). Likewise, they do not always bring resources into the assistance relationships but also sometimes selectively keep external resources or demands out of the relationship (an activity sometimes called "buffering"), also to advance the relationships' goals.

For example, I have demonstrated how district administrators in the context of school-community partnerships and small autonomous schools initiatives operated as boundary spanners between central offices and schools (Honig, 2006, 2009). In such boundary positions, central office administrators helped deepen school-level practice in part by linking schools and external resources including other central office administrators in ways that fed new resources into schools. These central office administrators did not simply pass on new resources but helped

school principals make sense of them and how principals might use those resources to advance their own locally developed school improvement plans. These central office administrators also enabled implementation by buffering schools from external interference through various strategies (Honig, 2009).

Valuing and Legitimizing "Peripheral Participation"

Various school reform researchers have highlighted the harmful effects of designating schools as "low performing" (e.g., Mintrop, 2003; O'Day, 2002). Likewise, sociocultural and organizational learning theorists suggest that organizational performance and the capacity for improvement may decline under such designations because such designations do not help members of those organizations see themselves on a path toward improvement (Rogoff, 1994; Wenger, 1998; see also March, 1994). Rather, individuals tend to deepen their engagement in activities when they view themselves as valued participants in an endeavor and as people capable of deepening their engagement in that endeavor, regardless of their starting capacity. In assistance relationships that build on these ideas, participants identify each other as more or less expert with a particular set of activities (what some call "experts" and "novices")—but they frame the participation of novices as within reach of more expert performance. Some theorists call this set of activities legitimizing peripheral participation.

For instance, in our recent study, my research team and I demonstrated how central office administrators supported principals' development as instructional leaders in part by creating opportunities for each principal in their network of principals to serve as a resource for the others in some aspect of instructional leadership practice. In these ways, the central office administrators helped principals view themselves as valued members of a community of principals all trying to improve their instructional leadership practice—which increased their engagement in the network and in trying to improve their instructional leadership.

Creating and Sustaining Social Engagement

Fundamental to all these activities—focusing relationships on joint work, modeling, developing and using tools, brokering resources, and valuing peripheral participation—are rich, deep, sustained social interactions (Vygotsky, 1978). Through such interactions, participants grapple together with what particular forms of practice, modeling, tools, resources, and identity structures mean and how to engage meaningfully with them. Absent opportunities for such challenging conversations, participants tend not to fully engage with new ideas or come to terms with their implications for their own practice. When people interact with others in these ways, they

may increase the individual and collective knowledge they bring to a situation (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; see also Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). Through dialogue, individuals may challenge each others' understandings, offer competing ideas about underlying problems and potential solutions, and form coalitions in support of certain interpretations over others (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Steyaert, Bouwen, & Looy, 1996. See also Blau, 1963, on the importance of consultations with colleagues).

Research on school districts is replete with instances of how the organization of central office administrators' work actually curbs these kinds of rich social interactions (e.g., Hannaway, 1989; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). As one counter-example, my research in Oakland Unified School District (CA) revealed how formal, facilitated, ongoing meetings between central office administrators and school and community leaders focused central office administrators on specific problems of practice at individual schools and on engaging them in strategies that promised to advance school-community improvement goals (Honig, 2003, 2004). In these relationships, leaders of external organizations were important facilitators of discussions between central office administrators and school-level leaders that reflected meaningful engagement in the kinds of social interactions outlined here (Honig, 2004).

Using Evidence From Assistance Relationships and Other Sources to Ground Central Office Policy and Practice

Up to this point I have emphasized that, when central offices operate as learning organizations, some central office administrators work with school principals, teachers, and other school-level staff in the kinds of assistance relationships that sociocultural learning theories in particular have associated with deepening professionals' work practice. Given their direct relationship to teaching and learning improvement in schools, I argue that they form the core of central office support for such outcomes. But, arguably, not all central office administrators should participate in the direct school assistance relationships. After all, not all central office administrators have the expertise to engage in the kinds of activities involved in those relationships. Furthermore, central offices of various sizes carry out a host of important functions that arguably should operate in service of teaching and learning improvement but that would not necessarily be performed better if staff conducted them as part of the kinds of intensive direct assistance relationships described here. What might these other central office administrators do when they operate outside but in support of the direct assistance relationships and in support of districtwide teaching and learning improvement more broadly?

Depending on the size of the central office and how differentiated the central office staff, the practice of other central office administrators may vary widely. However, theories of organizational learning from experience suggest that across learning organizations, however differentiated the work of the subunits, organizational members engage in a set of common activities related to the use of evidence from experience: they systematically search for evidence from experience to inform their operations and continually grapple with whether and how to use that evidence to ground changes in their formal and informal policies and practices (Fiol & Lyles, 1985; Huber, 1991; Levitt & March, 1988). In school district terms, a central office operates as a learning organization then, not only when it engages in central office-school assistance relationships. Central offices operate as learning organizations also when other central office administrators search for evidence from the assistance relationships and other sources to ground the ongoing development or reform of central office policy and practice to support the assistance relationships and teaching and learning improvement more broadly.

For example, in an urban district in which I am currently conducting research, central office administrators engaged in assistance relationships found that particular features of the district's online budget system hampered school principals' ability to direct certain funds toward their school-improvement plans. Organizational learning theory suggests that if their central office operated as a learning organization, central office administrators in the budget office would be searching for such information about conditions that help or hinder school improvement and exploring how to use that information to reform their budget system.

Such evidence-use processes involve three distinct activities: searching for relevant evidence, incorporating (or intentionally not incorporating) that evidence into central office policy and practice, and retrieving or continually using the new policies and practices to ground ongoing central office operations. Processes of social sense-making are fundamental to all three.

Search, Encoding, Retrieval, & Sense-Making

Search, also called exploration, refers to activities by which organizational members such as central office administrators scan their environments for various forms of evidence they might use to inform what they do (Levitt & March, 1988). Search strategies include bringing in ideas, images, data, or examples that could inform how other central office administrators go about their work. Organizations may bring in new staff with experiences or practices that central office leaders want to support. An organization may designate individuals, organizational subunits, and other boundary spanners

to venture outside an organization to gather information (Huber, 1991; Kanter, 1988). Search also includes the unintentional gathering of information, such as when a school sends a request to their human resources unit for teaching candidates who have qualifications particularly appropriate to their school improvement approach. Given the importance of the assistance relationships to teaching and learning improvement, ongoing consultation with central office administrators engaged in these relationships appears as a primary potential search strategy—a strategy for bringing in ideas, images, data, examples, and other forms of evidence that could inform how other central office administrators go about their work.

Evidence from experience and other sources begins to become a part of what an organization does through a process of *incorporation*. When organizational members incorporate evidence, they use it to inform (or intentionally do not use it to ground) organizational policy and practice (Levinthal & March, 1993). Sometimes these policies and practices are formal— such as when central office administrators use evidence to draft a new written board policy or set of operating procedures for particular central office units. Incorporation of evidence in these formal ways seems to be an essential dimension of learning in central office contexts. But formal policy changes may or may not affect how individuals within central offices actually operate day-to-day (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Accordingly, organizational learning theorists also emphasize the importance of organizational members' considering how to incorporate new evidence into informal policies and practices—how people think about their work, the norms of particular units, and what people actually do day-to-day (see also McLaughlin, 1991; Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977).

For example, in one of my studies, central office administrators who worked directly with schools in the kinds of assistance relationships described above discovered that particular schools were hindered in implementing their school improvement plans by the length of time it took other central office administrators in the human resources department to respond to schools' requests for assistance with screening teaching candidates (Honig, 2009). The administrators realized that limited responsiveness from the human resources department stemmed not from the formal organization or from policies, but from how human resources administrators viewed their roles in relation to schools and how they conducted their work. In this case, the central office administrators who were in the assistance relationships engaged the human resources staff in various conversations and activities that helped them learn about individual schools' improvement plans, understand how they were trying to assist them in implementing those plans, and consider how the human resources staff might

transform their own work practices to better support both. In the end, the staff of the human resources unit improved their responsiveness to schools not by changing the formal policies or organization of their unit but by engaging in different kinds of relationships with schools that involved their coming to know their schools better and responding to that specific local knowledge.

Organizational learning also involves the ongoing use of incorporated evidence to guide subsequent choices and actions—a process some call *retrieval* (Fiol & Lyles, 1985; Levitt & March, 1988). During retrieval, organizational members use information that has already been incorporated into formal or informal policies and practices to guide their ongoing work. By including retrieval as part of organizational learning, theorists emphasize that organizations learn not simply when they develop formal policies and practices in response to experience but also when they actually use those policies and practices to inform what they do day-to-day and over time.

Evidence rarely shines an unambiguous light on which evidence central office administrators should pay attention to and whether and how they might use it (Honig & Coburn, 2008). Even already-incorporated evidence is not unambiguous regarding whether and how it should be used in new situations (March & Olsen 1975; van de Ven 1986; van de Ven & Polley 1992; Yanow, 1996). Accordingly, organizational learning theorists emphasize that *sense-making* (or what sociocultural learning theorists call negotiation) is a fundamental part of people's searching for, incorporating, and retrieving evidence (Kennedy, 1982; Weick, 1995). When people engage in sense-making, in broad terms, they grapple with such questions as: Which evidence is important to informing my own work? What does that evidence mean? What are its implications for whether and how I change how I go about my work? Theorists argue that such questions are productively engaged not by individuals but through sustained and challenging dialog among individuals. Thus, search, encoding, and retrieval require regular opportunities for central office administrators not only to have access to evidence but to engage with others about what evidence means and whether and how they should use it.

Factors That Help or Hinder Central Offices as Learning Organizations

Organizational learning research elaborates many conditions that help or hinder the operation of organizations as learning organizations. At least three of these conditions seem particularly relevant to central office contexts. For one, just as assistance relationships may help deepen school-level practice, central office administrators too may require assistance relationships to help them deepen

their own practice in the ways described above (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). Such assistance may be particularly essential in central offices that have not traditionally focused on such intensive support for districtwide teaching and learning improvement. Participants in these *central office* assistance relationships might include other central office administrators (Blau, 1963; Brown & Duguid, 1991; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988), members of an intermediary organization or a school reform support organization (Honig, 2004), or the focal central office administrators themselves, as they engage in "self-instruction, self-questioning, self-praise, and self-punishment" (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988, p. 87).

Second, an organization's prior knowledge mediates how its members participate in their work, especially when their work demands the kinds of practices outlined above. In this case, prior knowledge for central office administrators to participate productively in assistance relationships might include deep knowledge of high-quality teaching and learning and how to support it. In addition, search encoding and retrieval, and, specifically, an organization's "ability... to recognize the value of new external information [or, more broadly, evidence], assimilate it, and apply it ... is largely a function of the [organization's]... level of prior related knowledge" (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990, p. 128). Such "prior related knowledge" necessary for moving school-level information into supportive central office policy and practice may include a deep knowledge of the conditions that affect the implementation of school improvement strategies, including central office policies and practices. Central office leaders interested in engaging in organizational learning might consider what prior knowledge such activities demand, whether they have the requisite prior knowledge, and, if not, what strategic hires or alliances with others might help them expand their knowledge resources (Powell, Koput, & Smith-Doerr, 1996).

Lastly, actual or perceived performance levels can also frustrate engagement in search, incorporation, and retrieval in particular (Levinthal & March, 1993; Levitt & March, 1988; March, 1991). On the one hand, decision makers in organizations performing above their performance targets, sometimes called "successful organizations," tend to limit their search activities and to over-rely on what they already know and are doing, even if new evidence might advance organizational goals. These decision makers also are likely to over-sample feedback that reaffirms their success—to notice evidence that confirms their competencies and minimally disrupts their current beliefs and practices. For example, central office administrators in some of Spillane's (2000) studies tended to interpret new conceptions of teaching and learning as confirming of and consistent with activities in which they were already engaged, even

though those new conceptions fundamentally challenged their ongoing activities.

On the other hand, decision makers in organizations performing below their targets tend to search incessantly for new evidence and rarely take action on that new information. Such organizations might include central offices that continually surface new ideas from practice and other sources about the kinds of central office policy and practice changes that might enable teaching and learning improvements but that routinely fail to take action on those ideas to actually change their policies and practices. Organizations that are perceived as failing are also more likely to act on evidence that they believe will help them inch closer to their performance targets or that will create the appearance of improvement, rather than more substantially rethink and change their work practices. For example, studies of how school district central offices respond to high-stakes accountability initiatives reveal various ways that central office administrators in "low-performing" districts search minimally for improvement strategies and choose those that promise marginal or superficial improvements (O'Day, 2002). In other words, both high- and low-performing districts will face challenges in making the kinds of changes sketched here and might do well to anticipate such success and failure "traps" (Levitt & March, 1988; March 1994).

Conclusions and Future Directions

The notion that school district central offices should operate as learning organizations has gained significant currency in educational practice and research communities. However, calls for districts to become learning organizations tend not to move beyond the image or metaphor of a "learning organization" to elaborate specific activities and work practices that may be involved when school district central offices do operate as such organizations. This article argues that sociocultural and organizational learning theories provide a set of rich, research-based ideas that might help district central office leaders understand what more specifically organizational learning may involve in their context. I applied ideas from these theories to suggest that, when central offices operate as learning organizations, their staff engage in at least two sets of broad activities: assistance relationships with schools around teaching and learning improvement; and forms of evidence use that focus central office administrators outside the assistance relationships on what they can do to support both the assistance relationships and teaching and learning improvement more broadly. Assistance relationships involve particular practices including modeling and brokering. The evidence-use processes include intentional strategies of searching for and using evidence. Various conditions may help or hinder central

office administrators in engaging in these work practices including the availability of others who can assist them in what, for some, will mean substantial changes in how they understand and go about their daily work.

While research on learning lends substantial support for these activities, educational researchers have yet to test these hypotheses in the context of school district central offices. Educational researchers might do well to advance knowledge of school district central offices and teaching and learning improvement if they examined school district central offices that aimed to engage in the activities I describe here and probed the extent to which such activities might be associated with actually enhancing conditions for teaching and learning improvement.

In the meantime, this framework raises a number of questions educational leaders, and district central office leaders in particular, might productively consider now in the context of their own practice. For one, to what extent are we as a school system engaging in the development not only of teachers, school principals, and other school-based staff, but also of our *central office staff* as key agents in strengthening teaching and learning districtwide? Whole industries have emerged around the professional development of principals and teachers, but attention to central office administrators' professional development has received far less attention and resources. How can school districts, in partnership with institutions of higher education and others, expand opportunities for central office administrators to organize and engage in central office administration-as-learning organizations?

Educational leaders also might explore: Do central office administrators have *opportunities to connect with schools and with one another* in ways that learning demands? My own research studies are replete with comments by central office administrators that they rarely have time to confer with colleagues about basic day-to-day demands, let alone the complex challenges and sense-making that arise when working closely with schools on teaching and learning. How can central office administrators find the time and support to engage in such collaborations?

In addition, educational leaders and others might ask: Are we communicating to central office administrators that their engagement in the learning activities outlined here is *valued?* And, have we created opportunities for central office administrators to be recognized and rewarded for their work? After all, the activities outlined here may constitute major shifts in roles and responsibilities for some central office administrators and, given the complexity of the work, direct feedback on individual performance may at best be slow in coming. In such a context, clear communication by central office leaders about the value of the work may be essential to central office administrators' engagement in it.

Finally, central office administrators might consider: Do we, or will we, have access to professionals who can model these new central office work practices? The ideas about assistance presented above emerged from settings in which some participants in the relationship had the capacity to model particular ways of engaging in learning. Such capacity may not reside in some central offices and may be beyond what some central office administrators can build in the near term. While they build their own capacity, central office administrators might focus their efforts in the short term on how they can partner with others to bring expertise into their assistance relationships with schools.

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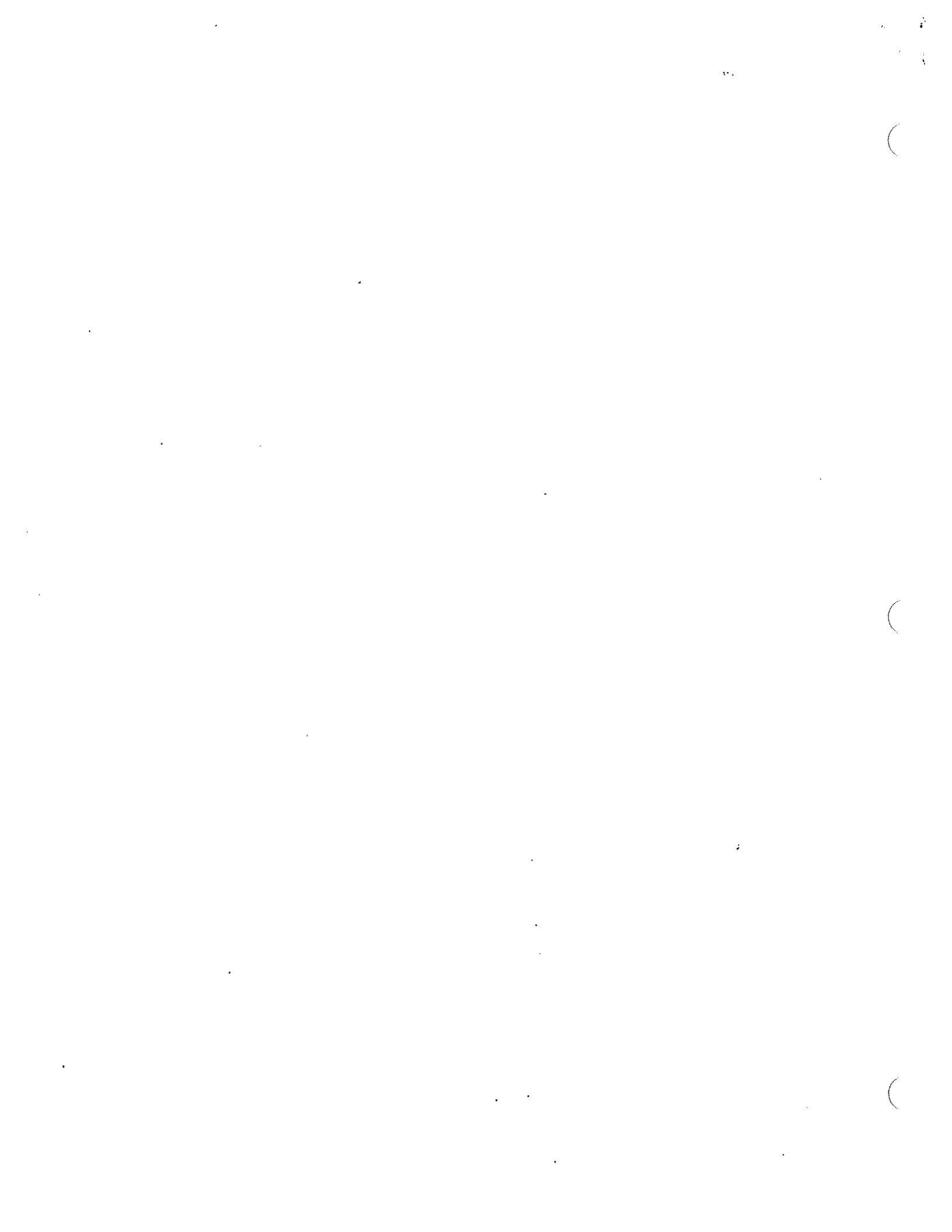
ISSUE BRIEF

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REINVENTING DISTRICT CENTRAL OFFICES TO EXPAND STUDENT LEARNING

By Meredith I. Honig, Ph.D., and Michael A. Copland, Ph.D., University of Washington–Seattle

In recent years, midsized to large school district central offices across the country have begun to undertake challenging initiatives to reinvent themselves to more intentionally support learning for all students districtwide. These learning- and equity-focused efforts build on decades of research showing that learning improvements fail to penetrate the majority of schools in a district without substantial central office support for various changes throughout district systems. What do research and experience teach about the dimensions of central office reinvention that seem to matter for expanding student learning? How can central office administrators participate productively in the reinvention process?

In pursuing these questions, we quickly found that the practice of central office reinvention efforts outstrips research. To be sure, in recent years a number of districts have attempted to take on key leadership roles in learning improvement through various discrete initiatives such as curriculum reform, new human resources strategies, and accountability efforts. But wholesale central office reinvention—efforts to fundamentally shift how the entire district central office operates as an institution—are still in their infancy

across the country. Not surprisingly, data on how these efforts actually play out in practice and their impacts on student learning are still relatively limited. However, central office reinvention efforts may do well to involve particular central office practices that researchers have found to matter in improving learning in the context of more modest central office reform efforts. Perhaps not coincidentally, we found that some of the longer term central office reinvention efforts across the country involve these practices in various respects. The jury is still out on whether these particular reinvention efforts will impact student learning. Nonetheless, the fact that they reflect emerging findings in the research literature on school district central offices suggests that they may be on the right track and offer important immediate lessons and illustrations for district leaders.

We elaborate on these points first by framing the urgency for central office reinvention as part of districtwide learning improvement initiatives. We then draw on recent district research studies to outline

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what the available research suggests may be important dimensions of central office reinvention efforts. We illustrate these dimensions with examples from central office reinvention efforts currently planned or under way in Atlanta Public Schools, New York City Public Schools, and Oakland Unified School District (California). We focus on these districts because during the past several years, each of them has made significant investments in central office reinvention as an important educational improvement strategy; accordingly, these districts arguably provide examples of central office reinvention efforts that are fairly well along, at least in their conceptualization.[1] These districts also represent a range of midsized to large urban contexts; therefore, their examples may resonate directly with leaders across different types of urban and suburban districts and relatively large rural districts. We conclude with key questions for education leaders to consider regarding the role of central office administrators in expanding learning districtwide.

District Central Offices and Learning Improvements: Great Urgency, Few Guides

Recent, promising school improvement initiatives call on school district central offices to play unprecedented, integral leadership roles in strengthening student learning districtwide (Copland & Knapp, 2006; Honig, 2006; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2001; Knapp, Copland, & Talbert, 2003; Knapp et al., 2003). Federal and state policies of previous decades largely overlooked school district central offices and focused on schools and eventually states as main agents in helping students reach basic minimum levels of competency. In contrast, contemporary federal and state policies as well as prominent initiatives by private foundations call on

school district central offices to participate centrally in helping all schools districtwide build their capacity to help all students learn at high levels (Cuban & Usdan, 2003). These demands implicate not only superintendents but also frontline, midlevel, and executive staff throughout central offices.

Central office administrators' productive participation in districtwide learning improvement seems essential to realizing such goals. For decades, various school improvement efforts have struggled or failed—in part because of limited or disappointing central office participation (e.g., Bryk, Sebring, Kerbow, Rollow, & Easton, 1998; Chubb & Moe, 1990; Malen, Ogawa, & Kranz, 1990; Ravitch & Viteritti, 1997). These and related findings suggest that district central offices are key players in realizing learning improvement goals (Honig & Hatch, 2004). However, research mainly features what central offices do when they curb implementation, not how they can enable it.

Those district central offices that have traditionally played reportedly limited or unproductive roles in learning support likely lack the capacity to participate in such work (Marsh, 2002). Many urban districts, in particular, operate under conditions that can significantly frustrate central office participation in learning improvement. According to policy analyses as well as various reports in the popular media, these conditions include the threat or reality of state takeover (Elmore, Ableman, & Fuhrman, 1996; Goertz & Duffy, 2003; Katz, 2003a); severe budget shortfalls (Bach, 2005; Katz, 2003b); increasing state controls on resource allocations to classrooms (Kepner, 2007); and desegregation and special education consent decrees that focus on compliance with external mandates rather than primarily on learning support (Boghossian, 2005; Chute, 2007; Haynes, 2007).

An emerging body of research examines the efforts of some districts to buck these trends and play more prominent roles in learning improvement, usually through discrete efforts to reform mathematics or literacy curriculum and instruction, to recruit highly qualified teachers and principals, or to increase school accountability for results (e.g., Burch & Spillane, 2004; Corcoran & Foley, 2003; Cuban & Usdan, 2003; Darling-Hammond, Hightower, Husbands, Lafors, Young, & Christopher, 2005; Elmore, 1997; Hightower, Knapp, Marsh, & McLaughlin, 2002; Hubbard, Stein, & Mehan, 2006; Knapp et al., 2003; Spillane, 1996; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). These initiatives are certainly ambitious but far more limited in scope than central office reinvention efforts that aim to remake central office functions across the district. Nonetheless, these studies offer some compelling lessons—lessons about how district central offices matter to learning improvement—that seem applicable to central office reinvention efforts. Interestingly, we find that central office reinvention efforts across the country reflect these lessons by doing the following:

- Engaging central office administrators across the central office in learning-focused partnership relationships with schools.

- Investing substantially in the development of central office administrators as key reform participants.

- Supporting central office administrators in inventing new forms of participation in reform on the job.

- Involving external support providers in central office support roles.

In the following sections, we elaborate on these lessons from research on school district central offices and illustrate them with examples from district central office reinvention efforts currently under way in Atlanta Public Schools, New York City Public Schools, and Oakland Unified School District.

Lessons From Research on District Central Offices and Examples From Practice

PARTNERSHIP RELATIONSHIPS. First, in district central offices that play promising roles in learning improvement, central office administrators engage not mainly in limited, compliance-oriented or managerial relationships with schools but in learning-focused "partnership" relationships with them. The activities involved in these partnership relationships go by many names in the research literature, including "building policy from practice" and "organizational learning" (Honig, 2003), valuing "working knowledge" (Kennedy, 1982), "reform as learning" (Hubbard et al., 2006), "inquiry-based practice" (Copland, 2003), and, simply "leadership" (Burch & Spillane, 2004). By whatever name, these partnerships generally call on central offices to dedicate a group of central office administrators to work closely with school leaders to accomplish the following:

- Identify "problems of practice" or what some call "joint work"—that is, conditions that seem to impede student learning; and strategies that may help schools, central offices, and their communities address those conditions to enable learning at high levels for all students.

- Codevelop intentional, public theories of action that provide an articulated rationale for why particular courses of action may help improve learning in their own contexts.

- Develop central office and school policies and practices consistent with those theories of action.

- Continually revisit and refine those theories of action, policies, and practices as implementation unfolds to build on lessons learned and other evidence.

- Hold each other accountable for results.

In some districts, the central office administrators dedicated to these partnership relationships are located in a division of teaching and learning. However, in other districts, various central office administrators participate, including those in human resources and purchasing.

Partnership relationships of this sort move beyond long-standing debates about whether schools or the central office should direct educational improvement efforts. Rather, these relationships rest on assumptions that each party—the central office and the schools—has knowledge essential to expanding students' opportunities to learn and that such distributed expertise should be shared and used. Such relationships are fundamentally dynamic (Murphy & Hallinger, 1988) and rooted in notions of reciprocal accountability (Fink & Resnick, 2001). In such relationships, district central offices do not abandon their traditional assessment functions but redefine them so that they help build school and district capacity for learning improvement.

Atlanta. For example, since 1999, Atlanta Public Schools, under the leadership of Superintendent Beverly Hall, Ed.D., has aimed to reimagine and reconfigure the work of its central office regarding school support relationships. Dr. Hall inherited a central office organized in traditional "silos" of activity, removed from immediate contact with schools. Intended changes in central office structure, function, and operation include the physical relocation of new key central office administrators, known as School Reform Team (SRT) executive directors, out into schools. SRT executive directors are mandated to improve teaching and learning within a small cluster of schools. Hired into the new role specifically for their instructional leadership expertise, they are to act as a main point of contact for each school principal and are to respond rapidly to schools' requests for teaching and learning assistance. SRT resources include a cadre of model teacher leaders who are subject-area specialists in content and pedagogy and who provide targeted, real-time professional support to schools. SRT executive directors tell us that their day-to-day work involves figuring out how to act as efficient and effective resource brokers between the central office and schools, in a way that supports diverse school needs and interests, while staying true to the district's overarching vision for improving teaching and learning. Through a new regular system of assessments and direct communication between school principals and the superintendent, central office and SRT staff receive feedback on their efforts.

New York City. In New York City Public Schools, central office staff for years had been deployed into geographically based offices (similar to the new offices in Atlanta), but relationships between the central office and some schools—by many accounts—remained primarily supervisory, distant, and not focused on learning improvement. In July 2007, the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) replaced the central office regional structure with three broad categories of support specifically for learning improvements. Schools now have increased discretion over their own budgets and, regardless of their geographic location, may purchase services to support their learning improvement efforts through one of the following avenues:

- **Local Support Organizations (LSOs).** Each LSO focuses on a different dimension of school improvement (namely, Integrated Curriculum and Instruction Learning Support Organization, Community Learning Support Organization, Leadership Learning Support Organization, and Knowledge Network Learning Support Organization). Schools that affiliate with an LSO receive a range of supports determined by LSO staff based in part on their own expertise in particular areas and schools' demands for particular services.

- **Private Support Organizations (PSOs).** NYCDOE likewise selected several

external organizations, called PSOs, to work intensively with schools on particular learning improvement approaches and to infuse the public school system with resources for school support beyond those available from in-district staff.

- **Empowerment Schools Organization (ESO).** The ESO works with "empowerment schools," which are schools granted new freedoms from central office rules regarding various aspects of school operations beyond the freedoms available to all schools. Through the ESO, each empowerment school affiliates with a network team that includes new central office staff—typically a network leader, an achievement coach, a lead instructional mentor, and a business manager—to work together to provide school-by-school support for improving teaching and learning. Although network leaders' roles vary in part by leaders' expertise and schools' needs, all network leaders we interviewed agreed that the role of a network leader and a network team is not to supervise or monitor principals but to support them—to help bring various resources to bear on schools' efforts to chart their own path for school improvement.

In tandem with this new central office support structure for schools, Integrated Service Centers across the city provide a range of assistance to schools and their network teams for largely managerial functions such as processing some purchases and requests for leave. NYCDOE leaders tell us that they intend to focus schools on improving student learning in part by improving the efficiency with which the central office carries out these other business functions. All of these efforts are supported by a new periodic and annual assessment system that aims to provide leaders throughout the district system with real-time data and other new tools for understanding progress at the level of individual students.

Oakland. In the Oakland Unified School District, central office departments and divisions of the past focused on the administration and monitoring of particular grant programs—or otherwise operated, in the words of one central office administrator, "for their own sake, without any rhyme or reason regarding what schools needed." Under the banner "Expect Success!" school-based financing and a weighted student funding formula have helped give schools what some central office leaders call "purchasing power" and prompted the central office to operate in a school-service mode. Now, a central office strategy team spearheads various cross-cutting strategic planning processes to identify core services that the central office will provide or make available to schools for purchase, depending on their learning improvement strategies. Central office leadership eliminated many long-standing central office departments or streamlined them into what they call the Service Organization, which, according to its official description, aims to provide "reliable support to educators in human resources, in the smart use of data, in teacher training, in payroll, and in other areas necessary to keep schools running smoothly." New central office staff called Network Executive Officers (NExOs) work with groups of school principals and schools to help build their capacity to make their own strategic decisions about learning improvements and to meet the accountability-for-results demands that go along with their new purchasing power. Central office leaders tell us that they aim to infuse these efforts with an "accountability culture" reinforced by multiple opportunities for staff and community members to look continuously at data on student learning and provide feedback on district progress.

CENTRAL OFFICE STAFF DEVELOPMENT.
Second, to support these partnership relationships, districts make substantial investments in the development of the people who work within central offices as key reform participants. Promising school-

improvement efforts have struggled even in the face of supportive formal policies, in part because central office administrators have not participated productively in their implementation (e.g., Malen et al., 1990). Such findings suggest that strengthening how central offices support student learning is not solely or even mainly a technical matter of developing better policies and formal governance structures. Rather, central office support involves helping administrators throughout central offices build their capacity to participate productively in improvement efforts (Burch & Spillane, 2004; Honig, 2004b; Honig, 2006). Such an approach requires significant investments not only in schools but also in the professional development of central office staff. All three of the districts we feature make substantial investments in the development of central office administrators' professional practice.

New York City. For example, as noted, New York City's ESO network team members are charged with hands-on work with each school principal to improve student learning. To support the development of these new central office staff, other central office leaders and local professional development experts convene the network leaders and other team members in various configurations to explore particular problems of practice and to share lessons learned. As the number of empowerment schools has expanded, "veteran" network leaders, as well as principals themselves, have nominated individuals to oversee new networks, and the more experienced leaders serve as formal mentors to the incoming network leaders and their network teams. These efforts play out in the context of a broader human capital development strategy that includes careful selection of principals who may operate ably in an empowerment context with high demands regarding student learning and accountability for it.

Atlanta. In Atlanta, the district created a new Project Management Office to provide direction and support for cross-functional teams' focused projects. It also created new evaluation processes to make clear the performance expectations for the new work. A central office administrator highlighted how this change created a felt need for seasoned individuals on his team who were used to doing business the old "Atlanta way" to learn to shift their ways of working within and across departments in order to meet new performance expectations associated with the changes. This shift has been supported through the introduction of collaborative planning processes between personnel in various parts of the central office, helping to break down the traditional barriers between "silos" in the central office.

Oakland. Oakland's NExOs each develop network leadership plans that focus on their own development and that of their principals. We have observed how, as part of their semimonthly meetings, NExOs take turns presenting challenges that particular schools in their networks are facing and elaborating on how they have been supporting the principals in those schools in developing their capacity for instructional leadership. Other NExOs and central office administrators then engage in extended dialogue with the presenting NExO about how to strengthen their participation in principal and school support. Such critical, inquiry-focused consultations focus in part on underlying school-level barriers to learning improvement but mainly hone in on how the NExOs themselves can better support school-based improvement efforts. These professional development opportunities are part of a broader human resources investment strategy to improve the capacity of employees throughout the district.

INVENTIVENESS. Third, central office administrators in these districts are encouraged to invent on-the-job what it means to engage in these new partnership relationships. Beyond the general admonition that central office administrators should support learning,

research-based models of this professional practice are virtually nonexistent. Even extensively documented cases, such as that of New York City's Community School District 2 in the 1990s (Elmore, 1997), reveal little about how administrators throughout central office units transform their daily practice to better support learning improvement. Some research refers to how the district participated in successful reform efforts but does not differentiate who in the central office participated in such efforts, what they did, how their work may have differed from that of other central office administrators, and how their work evolved over time (e.g., Marsh et al., 2005). Even if detailed models of central office practice were available, such practices invariably would involve some degree of context-specific, on-the-job invention as central office administrators work in partnership with schools to continually gauge how to deepen schools' capacity for strengthening student learning (Honig, 2006). Within the districts we feature here, central office leaders have created new opportunities for central office staff to imagine new roles for themselves that support learning improvements.

New York City. NYCDOE network leaders come from a broad range of backgrounds— from teaching and the principalship to private business, higher education administration and research, educational philanthropy, and community organizing. Central office leaders explain that the selection of such a varied group reflects a deliberate strategy to infuse the system with new paradigms of school support. According to one facilitator of the professional support sessions noted above, these sessions aim not to bring the network leaders to consensus about what a network leader does but to generate ideas about a range of ways that network leaders might operate to support schools and what network leaders are learning about the benefits and limitations of different approaches.

Oakland. Leaders in the Oakland Unified School District have configured central office staff in a matrix structure, in which many central office administrators belong both to their regular unit (e.g., human resources or budget) but also to a time-limited project team. Each project team is charged with reinventing a dimension of central office operations. For example, project teams in 2007 addressed principal leadership development, the elaboration of the network model, new school support, community engagement in Expect Success, performance management for network leaders, and technology support to schools and the overall Expect Success effort. This project-team approach reflects principles of the "new public management," which include empowering staff to use their expert knowledge of particular work functions to invent solutions to nonroutine problems.

EXTERNAL SUPPORT. Fourth, external support for central office administrators seems essential to enabling central office administrators' productive participation in the dynamic learning support partnerships. Research has begun to demonstrate how community agencies and reform-support organizations, in particular, can significantly assist with not only school change but also central office participation in learning improvement initiatives (Corcoran & Lawrence, 2003; Gallucci, Boatright, Lysne, & Swinnerton, 2006; Honig, 2004a; Honig, 2004b; Marsh et al., 2005; Smylie & Wenzel, 2003). In these arrangements, fellows or coaches from the external organization assist central office staff specifically in their own transformation efforts. As part of this process, some external colleagues model the various ways that central office leaders could work with school principals and others to address various problems of practice and provide other resources for central office change.

Atlanta. For example, as an early partner in Atlanta's district reinvention effort, Graduation Really Achieves Dreams (Project GRAD),

a national reform organization, brokered relationships between Atlanta and a number of external school reform models such as Success for All and Move It Math. These partnerships and the resulting strategies produced significant and rapid initial improvement in achievement outcomes for students in a cohort of Atlanta's most challenged schools. Project GRAD staff, employed through a combination of district funds and external support from Atlanta's philanthropic community, developed into key partners in planning and implementing the work of reform alongside district central office administrators. The former executive director of Project GRAD Atlanta, Kweku Forstall, described his role in working as a bona fide member of the superintendent's senior cabinet as "friendly agitator," charged with raising critical questions that helped the district stay focused on providing quality support for the poorest performing schools early on in Dr. Hall's tenure.

Oakland. The Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools (BayCES) has been a significant driver of Oakland's central office redesign efforts. In the early 2000s, the BayCES executive director partnered with staff of the district's Office for School Reform to elaborate a model for a fundamentally new central office that would operate as a learning support network—a coordinated group of highly skilled staff working to strengthen students' opportunities to learn equitably across Oakland's schools. This external assistance model became the blueprint for the current central office reinvention effort that has survived through Oakland entering state receivership in 2003 and operating under three state administrators between 2003 and 2008. In the past two years, several BayCES staff members have become so involved with the redesign work that they have taken on full-time positions within the district's central office to assist with the redesign effort in such foundational areas as principal recruitment and support. BayCES directors currently design and facilitate the consultations that anchor professional development for the NExOs.

Key Questions for District Central Office Leadership

This review of literature and district examples raises key questions that central office leaders might consider if they are interested in central office reinvention strategies that aim to deepen how district central office administrators support student learning districtwide. First and foremost: Are we making significant investments in the central office as a site of change? District leaders who are serious about engaging their central office staff as key reform participants might further consider the following questions:

- Are we adequately investing in our people within the central office to forge the kinds of new school-partnership relationships that seem fundamental to districtwide learning improvements?

- Are we reinforcing those partnership relationships with new work structures and accountability systems that promise to seed and grow learning improvements?

- Are we providing our central office administrators with the resources and freedom to invent new ways of participating in learning support?

- Are we engaged in strategic partnerships with external organizations not only to provide knowledge and other resources to schools but also to bolster the work of central office reinvention?

As educational research has demonstrated for decades, many school improvement efforts post disappointing results, in part because of limited central office participation in implementation. The research and examples from our three featured districts highlight the importance of engaging central office administrators as key participants in educational improvement and suggest that ambitious central office reinvention initiatives in particular may prompt meaningful central office change in support of learning outcomes.

Endnote

[1] For these and other reasons, we currently are focusing on these three districts as part of a national study on educational leadership funded by the Wallace Foundation. A series of literature reviews that were published in a run up to the study design may be downloaded from http://www.wallacefoundation.org/KnowledgeCenter/KnowledgeTopics/CurrentAreasofFocus/EducationLeadership/LeadingLearningLeadership.htm

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