![New Leaders for New Schools logo]

Defining an Urban Principalship to Drive Dramatic Achievement Gains

Version 1.0 – We offer this as an initial hypothesis and welcome feedback that will inform Version 2.0

March 10, 2008

This report offers preliminary lessons learned from schools making dramatic student achievement gains and describes implications for redefining the urban principalship. You can go to www.nlns.org for more information or email Gbottamini@nlns.org with comments or questions as we revise and begin to conduct research on this hypothesis.

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Table of Contents

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INTRODUCTION

Research and experience suggest that successful and fast-improving schools typically have outstanding principals. Indeed, some research has shown that the quality of the principal is the second most important in-school factor (after the quality of teaching) driving student achievement. Closing the academic achievement gap for low-income students will require dramatic improvement in low-achieving schools – and that will depend partly on having principals in those schools who can lead dramatic improvements. Therefore, closing the achievement gap without a robust principal quality strategy seems like a fight with one arm tied behind your back.

The good news is that there are individual schools across the U.S. with outstanding principals who have led truly dramatic improvements in academic achievement. These schools – including their students, principals, teachers -- demonstrate that our children from low-income backgrounds have the capacity to learn at high levels when children have the right expectations, support, and instruction from adults. And many of these principals demonstrate that it is possible for a school principal to use specific kinds of practice, strategy, and leadership to lead low-achieving, low-income schools to make dramatic improvements in student achievement.

The first piece of bad news is that none of this work has been done at scale. While an outstanding school principal is not the only ingredient in successful schools that can help every student reach high standards, any strategy at scale to help our schools achieve high standards for all students without an effective strategy to ensure highly successful principals at scale is unlikely to succeed.

A second piece of bad news is that we have an inadequate research and knowledge base about the difference between the specific patterns of school practice and principal action in low-achieving schools making dramatic achievement gains and the patterns in schools making incremental achievement gains. And there is little research on the success of efforts to translate the kinds of principal practice and action in those schools that are making dramatic improvements to other schools that haven't yet.

While a number of recent studies cited in this report have made important contributions to the knowledge base about leadership in turnaround schools, there are three specific gaps in research and analysis that New Leaders intends to help address in the coming years. First, we intend to rigorously compare the patterns of school and principal practice over time in low-achieving schools nationwide making dramatic achievement gains with similar schools in their school systems that are not making dramatic gains. Second, we intend to use a rigorous examination of that kind of evidence to offer a research-based hypothesis of a redefined principalship that can drive dramatic improvements in historically low-performing schools. Finally, we will work with RAND to ensure a high-quality longitudinal evaluation on links between principal selection, training, and coaching and student achievement improvement, publish the findings, and revise our work in light of those findings.

This report is not based on a rigorous enough research methodology to substantially close this knowledge gap yet. Based on our initial analysis, this report offers a very initial framework for one hypothesis of a redefined urban principalship

and school leadership teams that can drive dramatic achievement gains in historically low-performing schools. We are seeking critical feedback and comments before conducting further research and analysis to evaluate its accuracy and applicability.

And it is the first of a series of reports, articles, and video case studies that will highlight how principals are leading dramatic improvements in historically low-achieving schools and over time will carefully analyze how specific school practices and principal actions in schools making dramatic achievement gains differ from others making only incremental achievement gains.

Our preliminary analysis provided in this report highlights specific kinds of approaches and practices in 5 key areas that appear to be success factors where low-income schools and their principals are driving dramatic student achievement gains. These approaches and practices in these schools making dramatic achievement gains appear to be very different than approaches and practices in other similar schools.

Crucially, our preliminary analysis also suggests there are different practices and leadership approaches needed to put these in place at different stages of school improvement – a first phase of dramatic turnaround, a second phase of building on a strong foundation, and a third phase of maintaining/refining quality. For example, effective leadership appears to be more directive in the first phase (especially about consistency of the school's instruction and culture), delegation in the second, and distribution of leadership in the third. Yet effective leadership in the first phase is not dictatorial. Succeeding with that high level of being more directive appears to depend on strong interpersonal skills, communication skills and self-awareness in order to put into place a highly specific vision of instructional practice and school culture while motivating the school community to help do that. One mistake that seems common in leadership initiatives and programs is to assume substantial research about the effectiveness of distributive leadership in maintaining the quality of relatively successful schools should be applied in the first stage of school improvement.

The five key levers at a high level do appear to be the same across all stages --- i.e., achievement-based learning and teaching, school culture, ensuring the right people in the right jobs with the right skill development, aligned management and operations, and modeling personal leadership. These five areas are led by the principal and meaningfully involve an entire school community – especially students, families, teachers and all other school staff.

New Leaders for New Schools is one major national initiative designed to help transform urban public education at scale by defining a new urban principalship and providing high-quality principals who have the mindsets, knowledge, skills, and support needed to help every student achieve at high levels. By 2014, New Leaders aims to carefully recruit, select, train and support approximately 25% of the new principals needed for low-income, urban public schools across the U.S. New Leaders also aims to work with partner school systems to ensure that most of these principals are driving dramatic gains in academic achievement and that their schools achieve 90-100% student success rates within 5 years. Through future research and knowledge development, we hope to inform the work over time of policymakers and practitioners nationwide who are trying to ensure that there is an outstanding, well-prepared, well-supported principal in every one of our nation's public schools.

Below are the five key levers that successful principals in schools making dramatic achievement appear to be putting into place -- immediately as they begin to improve a school and mostly in place within three years. Crucially, the way that these practices are put in place differ notably according to the phase of a schools improvement as described elsewhere in this report.

A) <u>STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT-BASED LEARNING AND TEACHING</u>

- RIGOROUS AND GOAL-DRIVEN CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION.
- CONSISTENT ACROSS THE SCHOOL IN HOW STUDENTS LEARN.
- CONSISTENT FOCUS ON WHAT STUDENTS LEARN.
- MODIFIED REGULARLY BASED ON DATA.
- MODIFIED BY ALMOST DAILY FEEDBACK.
- SUPPLEMENTED BY INTERVENTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS.
- SUPPORTED BY PARENTAL ENCOURAGEMENT.
- DIFFERENTIATED TO ENSURE EVERY STUDENT MEETS HIGH STANDARDS.

B) <u>ACHIEVEMENTAND BELIEF-BASED SCHOOLWIDE CULTURE</u>

- GENUINE CARING ABOUT STUDENTS AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS.
- STUDENT AND STAFF CONFIDENT THEY CAN SUCCEED.
- STUDENTS EMBRACE ACADEMIC SUCCESS, WORKING HARD, AND KEY SCHOOLWIDE BELIEFS.
- ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IS PART OF THE SCHOOL'S COMMON SPACE AND LIFE.
- STUDENT CONDUCT PERMITS FOCUS ON LEARNING.
- STAFF MODEL VALUES AND FEEL SUPPORTED BY PRINCIPAL.

C) <u>RIGHT PEOPLE IN THE RIGHT ROLES</u>

- STAFF GET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS & MEANINGFUL FEEDBACK.
- WEEKLY QUALITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.
- FOCUS ON RECRUITING AND SELECTION.
- LOW-PERFORMING OR UNALIGNED STAFF LEAVE.
- EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM.

D) <u>MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS HELP DRIVE LEARNING AND SCHOOL CULTURE</u>

- FACILITY AND APPEARANCE IMPROVING.
- DETAILED SCHEDULE HELPS OPERATIONALIZE INSTRUCTIONAL VISION.
- STRATEGIC PLAN ENSURES FOCUS.
- BUDGET IS INCREASINGLY ALIGNED TO STRATEGIC PLAN.
- MANAGING LEGAL AND DISTRICT ISSUES TO PROTECT A FOCUS ON LEARNING.

E) <u>PERSONAL LEADERSHIP</u>

- HOLDS SELF ACCOUNTABLE FOR RESULTS.
- FOCUSES ON HIGH ACHIEVEMENT FOR EVERY STUDENT.
- BUILDS RELATIONSHIPS AND TRUST.
- WALKS THE TALK.
- COMMUNICATES EFFECTIVELY.
- INITIATES DIRECT, EVEN DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS.
- INSPIRES POSITIVISM AND POSSIBILITY.

DEFINING AN URBAN PRINCIPALSHIP TO DRIVE DRAMATIC ACHIEVEMENT GAINS

II. STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT PROGRESS AND FUTURE ANALYSIS AT NEW LEADERS

New Leaders for New Schools is at the forefront of linking principal selection, preparation, and support with student outcomes. As a national organization, we are well situated to be able to learn what it takes across a range of urban contexts to drive the kind of achievement the country needs. To help us understand New Leaders' impact on schools, we have engaged the RAND Corporation, one of the nation's premier social science research groups, to conduct an independent longitudinal evaluation of our efforts.[1] In addition, we collect, analyze, and learn from a range of other key data to drive learning about what it takes to support breakthrough achievement gains. A rigorous longitudinal evaluation will be published by RAND in 2011.

Our principals are seeing promising but not consistently dramatic results. RAND's preliminary analyses using value-added approaches showed that students in schools led by New Leaders principals for 3 or more years were improving academically at statistically significant faster rates than comparable children in the district. In some, though not all, instances, New Leaders' schools posted sizeable learning gains that, if maintained over time, could eradicate the achievement gap. *Similarly, public data show that a portion—roughly 20%—of New Leaders' principals achieve breakthrough achievement gains that would change the face of urban education if brought to scale.* Five schools led by New Leaders principals were the most improved or highest achieving school in their city – including the single most improved public schools in the states of California and Illinois. *That said, the average pace of improvement in schools led by New Leaders is not dramatic – and it is not yet on pace to close the achievement gap or to achieve our long-term student achievement goals.*

While these schools offer us great hope, the challenge remains to translate this breakthrough work into many other schools in our community—and thousands of others across the country. This report and our overall organizational learning efforts are focused on understanding and sharing what it takes for schools to achieve this kind of success so that we can close the achievement gap. During the past year, we have pursued a field-based learning agenda where we have visited our highest performing schools to learn from their work. In addition, our Effective Practice Incentive Community (EPIC) grant has identified schools with high learning gains in Denver, Memphis, Washington, D.C., and across a national pool of charter schools, and these schools go through intensive self-study and external evaluation to identify effective practices that will be documented and shared through videos, case studies, and profile reports. The deep understandings we are gaining from these field-based efforts are helping us refine our training and support programs.

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[1] The RAND Corporation will release a public report of their 5-year study in 2011. Because initial numbers are small and RAND is still exploring the best methodological approaches to use, RAND provides interim reports for New Leaders' internal learning, which we use to help us track our progress to goals.

In addition to field work, we rely on a range of internal data analyses to help us assess more broadly what plays into schools' dramatic success, and increasingly we are gaining deeper insight into what it takes to ensure this work gets done. Over the next several years our research plan will increasingly be able to provide more nuanced answers to key questions about what it takes for principals to successfully turn schools around. Such findings, when viewed in conjunction with our field-based learning and expert practitioner knowledge, both help New Leaders for New Schools improve its programs and help the larger educational reform community focus efforts on high-impact policies for transforming schools.

III. OVERALL FINDINGS AND SOURCES OF DATA

Our analysis so far has identified specific patterns of practice in fast-improving schools that school principals take direct responsibility for putting into place. Based on these patterns, we have created a hypothesis that in an achievement-based school system, a refined urban principalship and developed school leadership teams have the responsibility for achieving five sets of specific key levers in order to drive dramatic student achievement gains. These five are achievement-based learning and teaching, achievement-based school culture, ensuring the right people in the right jobs with the right orientation and skills, aligned management and operations, and personal leadership.

Several points are important when considering the findings.

First, our hypothesis is that the primary responsibility of the principal and school leadership team should be to drive high achievement for every student by taking responsibility for ensuring their school achieves these five key levers in very specific ways. Patterns in fast-improving schools suggest that it is possible for virtually all of these practices to be put in place within three years in an urban elementary and middle school. While the vast majority of schools examined in this analysis were elementary and middle schools, we plan to complete a similar analysis of the even more challenging task of creating dramatic achievement gains in high schools.

Second, this is by no means a checklist of practices to be administered. Instead, these should be viewed as specific key levers that when achieved will drive dramatic and sustained academic achievement gains for students.

Third, a crucial role of the principal as a leader is to use his or her judgment as a professional needed to assess the school and school system's context in order to determine exactly when and how to put these practices in place.

Fourth, there are different practices and leadership approaches needed to put these in place at different stages of school improvement – a first phase of dramatic turnaround, a second phase of building on a strong foundation, and a third phase of maintaining/refining quality. In particular, effective leadership appears to be more directive in the first phase (especially about consistency of the school's instruction and culture), delegation in the second, and distribution of leadership in the third. One mistake made in many leadership programs is to assume substantial research about the effectiveness of distributive leadership in maintaining the quality of relatively successful schools should be applied in the first stage of school improvement. In fact, the contrasting patterns observed in fast-improving schools when compared to slowly improving schools seems to suggest

that a distributive leadership approach during the first phase of improvement can undermine the ability of a school to make dramatic progress in student learning and achievement.

Another example of practice of successful schools in the first phase of change is that they achieve some important, quick wins that shift the school's focus and culture. This often starts in the first two weeks with clear expectations and consequences for student conduct and visible signs that the new school culture places a premium on students and staff feeling a greater sense of caring, support, and high expectations. These quick wins in the first two weeks are often followed in the first few months by a growing number of teachers and students gaining confidence in their ability to improve and commitment to the school's direction. This growing confidence and commitment is often triggered by teachers and students seeing evidence of success in similar schools and experiencing initially modest improvements in their own learning and teaching based on professional development and analysis of data.

To put together the initial hypothesis described in this report, New Leaders reviewed and drew on four sources of data. Future versions of this hypothesis and paper will be based on additional analyses of these four sources of data and a more robust research methodology.

The first source was some of the most prominent examples of research that studied the practices of effective schools and leadership. These included a comprehensive literature review sponsored by the Wallace Foundation (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004); a meta-analysis of studies of effective leadership; the components embedded in a newly developed assessment for principals (Goldring, Porter, Murphy, Elliot, & Cravens, 2007), and studies of high-performing/high-poverty and turnaround schools (Calkins, Guenther, Belfiore, & Lash, 2007; Carter, 2000; Chenoweth, 2007; Duke et al., 2005; Public Impact, 2007; Reeves, 2003).

The second source of data was a set of case studies of schools led by New Leaders principals that had shown substantial improvements in academic achievement. These case studies provide qualitative evidence of practices necessary to produce substantial gains from a small number of schools. These case studies were researched and written by New Leaders team member (and former Education Week reporter) Jeff Archer.

The third source of data was a series of visits New Leaders staff made to dozens of schools in the New Leaders network to examine school practices and principal actions. The schools were selected to include both those that had made dramatic gains in academic achievement based on careful analyses of student achievement data and those with comparable student populations that achieved incremental achievement gains. These schools were selected to help examine possible differences in the patterns of school practice and principal action in these two kinds of schools.

The final source was the experience and expertise resident in New Leaders staff and advisors -- based on their previous work in schools and businesses, on their recent work at New Leaders, and their experiences in fast-improving and slowly improving schools. The 300 schools that are part of the New Leaders network include both fast-improving and slowly improving schools and (because of careful data collection over the past 6 years) provide a wealth of data on these schools and their leaders at various stages of development.

III. Specific Practices In Fast-Improving, Low-Income Schools

Below are the five key levers and sets of practices that appear to drive dramatic student achievement gains based on our very preliminary analysis. In some subsections, italicized sentences are included to provide a quick example from a real school.

A) STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT-BASED LEARNING AND TEACHING

- **RIGOROUS AND GOAL-DRIVEN CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION. Curriculum and instruction is aligned to specific student learning goals and levels of rigor that are well-understood by teachers.** Teachers understand rigorous schoolwide goals for what students should know and do by the end of each grade level, unit of study, week and day in a well-articulated scope and sequence of learning standards.

- **CONSISTENT ACROSS THE SCHOOL IN HOW STUDENTS LEARN. How students learn is increasingly consistent across classrooms** including specific instructional practices, learning environment, student routines and classroom culture, and over time a relentless focus on planning and using every minute of classroom and other instructional time. While consistent across classrooms, instruction is differentiated within a classroom to target the learning needs to help diverse children achieve high levels.

- **CONSISTENT FOCUS ON WHAT STUDENTS LEARN. What students learn is increasingly consistent across classrooms – especially in literacy and math.** For example, literacy curriculum and instruction in every classroom includes a similar blend of and time allocated to phonemic awareness, comprehension, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, independent reading of books, non-fiction writing, and acquiring content knowledge.

- **MODIFIED REGULARLY BASED ON DATA. Instruction is modified based on quarterly and more frequent analysis by teachers and students of real-time data** on where individual students are achieving or missing very specific achievement goals. This is always quarterly and at an end of each unit – and also includes classroom formative assessments every week or day. *At Fort Worthington Elementary School in Baltimore, New Leaders principal Shaylin Todd has created "assessment walls" in every hallway that show grade level performance. She and the school team know the performance of every student and have developed intervention plans based on results. These plans are reinforced by grade-level meetings every six to eight weeks in which the leadership team develops strategies for every student.*

- **MODIFIED BY ALMOST DAILY FEEDBACK. Instruction is also modified based on daily or almost daily feedback** from principal or other instructional leaders as well as based on more intensive periodic classroom visits and weekly school-based professional development and common planning times that help teachers reflect, review data, and better understand desired instructional practice. This data is often posted publicly and helps focus staff on constant improvement.

- **SUPPLEMENTED BY INTERVENTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS. Students who have not mastered specific learning goals get supplemental, quality instructional intervention** -- usually in small groups and during classroom time as well as

wherever possible in extended day or year. *For example, at the Urban Assembly Academy for Law and Government in New York City, each grade-level team regularly analyzes data on students in the grade level and identifies those who are struggling, The team then meets with the students and draws up a six-week learning plan for every class in which the student needs to improve, and monitors performance at the end of that period.*

■ **SUPPORTED BY PARENTAL ENCOURAGEMENT. Parents and other family members are valued at the school and asked to support the school's instructional goals by encouraging their children's focus on learning** and academic achievement. For example, parents or family members are asked to regularly make sure students do their homework, asking about what they learned in school, and reading with them well into elementary school. *For example, at Clara Barton Elementary School, New Leaders principal Terry Carter organized a family math night to explain the school's math program to parents.*

■ **DIFFERENTIATED TO ENSURE EVERY STUDENT MEETS HIGH STANDARDS. There is a differentiated approach for individual students – including English language learners and students in special education** – so that every student's learning needs are met and can achieve high standards.

B) <u>ACHIEVEMENT AND BELIEF-BASED SCHOOLWIDE CULTURE</u> that is modeled consistently by the principal and where students and staff experience <u>daily</u> actions and reminders in every classroom that drive or showcase:

■ **GENUINE CARING ABOUT STUDENTS AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS. Every student sees that the school and individuals across the school genuinely care about his or her academic success and well-being.** While this is always accompanied by high expectations and often more structure, students in schools making dramatic achievement gains appear to understand that their teacher, the principal, and others genuinely care about their well-being and success. One driver of this is a frequent sense of fun and joy in the classroom and school that adults ensure are linked to students and their learning.

■ **STUDENT AND STAFF CONFIDENT THEY CAN SUCCEED. Every student and staff member knows that he or she has what it takes to succeed and meet high expectations** based on explicit evidence of their improvement, others' belief in them, and celebration of specific successes. Another powerful way to foster this belief is to show students and staff evidence of similar schools achieving great academic success or improvements. *For example, at Clara Barton School an 800-pupil PreK-8 school in Chicago, New Leaders principal Terry Carter started by insisting that the low-performing school would reach a 70 percent proficiency rate within a few years. To boost confidence, he showed skeptical staff members a video of a school that had succeeded with similar students to show that high levels of student achievement are possible and attainable.*

■ **STUDENTS EMBRACE ACADEMIC SUCCESS, WORKING HARD, AND KEY SCHOOLWIDE BELIEFS. Every student believes that "who I am and want to be" includes embracing specific school-wide values** of hard work, personal responsibility, academic success, helping others, and getting on track to finish high school ready for success in college and a career. In these schools a focus on academic achievement and core values in

pervasive. For these values to be embraced by students, ubiquitous language often succinctly provides a rationale for learning and achievement connected to what students at a particular age care about – e.g. "Knowledge is Power", "Climbing the Mountain to College", or each individual classroom named after a specific college or university. Students also are given meaningful voice and stake in the school in clearly defined ways – and this increases their personal interest in embracing the school's values. *For example, at the EPIC-identified Airways Middle School in Memphis, students are given academic challenges in the cafeteria during lunch and are given positive reinforcement for academic success.*

- **STUDENT CONDUCT PERMITS FOCUS ON LEARNING. Every student understands how to act in certain clearly defined ways in each classroom and public spaces at the school.** This is usually first due to consistent schoolwide expectations and consequences and corresponding reduction of referrals of students to the principal's office. The principal or leadership team usually creates a discipline handbook that is widely understood – and classroom expectations and rules are posted in every classroom. Over time, student conduct is consistently positive because that's what they begin to expect of themselves. *For example, New Leaders principal Jarvis Sanford knew he had to establish order when he arrived at Dodge Renaissance Academy in Chicago to make possible improvements in learning. He immediately spelled out clear expectations for student behavior, such as how students would walk in lines in hallways, and enforced these expectations consistently. He also made sure the staff modeled these expectations and established norms of respect; for example, he instituted a dress code for faculty and pitched in himself as a substitute teacher to show that everyone has a responsibility for maintaining the school culture.*

- **STAFF MODEL VALUES AND FEEL SUPPORTED BY PRINCIPAL. Every staff member models schoolwide values of high expectations for every student and understanding that the principal and leadership team cares about and supports their well-being and success in driving achievement gains for their students.**

C) **RIGHT PEOPLE IN THE RIGHT ROLES** who have the strong personal commitment <u>and</u> support to embrace the school's philosophy of learning, teaching, and culture and to improve their practice to drive dramatic student achievement gains. In these schools*:*

- **STAFF GET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS & MEANINGFUL FEEDBACK. Every staff member understands the principal's expectations for commitment to continuous improvement of results and classroom practice,** respectful and fair treatment of children, and instructional/other job responsibilities that are aligned to the school's mission and schoolwide expectations for instructional practice and culture. Meaningful feedback and growth opportunities are provided regularly to all members of the school to help improve. This also helps boost retention of staff that are aligned to mission and goals of the school.

- **WEEKLY QUALITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT. Every staff member participates weekly in at least 2-3 hours of quality school-based, principal-directed professional development and common planning time** where they gain understanding and skill in desired instructional and classroom practice and culture, review data on progress of students to standards, reflect on what they have learned, and modify their instructional plan for the following week. Where possible, significant school-based professional

development time during the summer – for 2 or 3 days at a minimum and ideally 1 or 2 weeks -- provides a big boost as do additional development opportunities.

- **FOCUS ON RECRUITING AND SELECTION. The principal and others devote substantial time to recruiting and carefully selecting mission-aligned, talented, and diverse staff for open positions.** The selection process often includes observing candidates teach model lessons. *For example, Jarvis Sanford at Dodge has sought teachers from districts as far away as Atlanta and Chicago that have strong reputations for developing effective teachers. And he has consulted with the RISE network, a national non-profit organization based in San Francisco that matches teachers wanting to serve at-risk students with urban schools that have supportive leadership.*

- **LOW-PERFORMING OR UNALIGNED STAFF LEAVE. A small number of low-performing staff are identified, get direct feedback and meaningful support to make improvements, and are fairly removed or counseled out if they don't improve.** In addition, other staff that aren't committed to continuous improvement of student results and classroom practice -- or to desired schoolwide practices -- choose to retire or work in a different school or office where there is better alignment between the organization's expectations and the individual's orientation.

- **EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM. School leadership team and academic support teams that gain strong ability, over time, to work together to lead a consistent, schoolwide approach to data-driven instructional practice and culture**. While the first phase of work is usually directed carefully by the principal, over time the leadership team (including full-time school leaders or instructional coaches and in many cases classroom teachers paid additional compensation for instructional leadership work) helps the principal drive learning and teaching practice. This includes leading weekly professional development sessions, using the principal's rubric for classroom visits and feedback, and one-on-one conversations with teachers about interim assessment data and implications for changes to instruction.

D) MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS OPERATIONALIZE SCHOOLWIDE VISION FOR INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE AND CULTURE. Principals ensure that facility and appearance improvements, the school's calendar and schedule, a strategic plan and information and data management are carefully leveraged to operationalize desired philosophy and vision for classroom learning and for school culture.

- **FACILITY AND APPEARANCE IMPROVING. Improvements and changes to the facility and appearance support school culture and the school's focus on student achievement, learning and teaching.** Early in the first stage, visible changes and improvements can boost the sense among students and staff that their well-being is valued by the school and principal. Over time, these changes can play a role in supporting other core values in the culture like high expectations for every student, the importance of working hard, and valuing student academic work.

- **DETAILED SCHEDULE HELPS OPERATIONALIZE INSTRUCTIONAL VISION. A detailed calendar and schedule is meticulously designed to help operationalize schoolwide vision for learning, teaching, and professional**

development. This is a crucial quick wins that pays off quickly and substantially. This detailed and consistent calendar and schedule includes class schedules (usually involving additional time for literacy), time for intervention with low-achieving students, weekly professional development and common planning time, leadership team meetings, teacher team meetings and prep periods, lunch and recess schedules, after-school programs, and periodic major assessment, data analysis and professional development practices. The scheduling of short-term interventions for low-performing students and major teacher professional development, for example is crucial to data-based instructional improvement because these practices must always take place shortly after interim student achievement data is available.

- **STRATEGIC PLAN ENSURES FOCUS. A strategic plan focuses the school on specific priorities within the five key levers in this report and to drive dramatic achievement gains.** This includes establishing focus and priorities for the principal, leadership team, and schoolwide instruction. It also includes a realistic assessment of what it will take to implement this plan, milestones and timelines, checkpoints to review progress, and ways to ensure that priorities are established that can secure adequate resources and leadership team time and focus. In most cases, the strategic plan was simply a succinct checklist of focus areas during the first year.

- **BUDGET IS INCREASINGLY ALIGNED TO STRATEGIC PLAN. Discretionary budget, resources and time are aligned to strategic plan and priorities**. These schools have reviewed budgets, in-kind resources, and external partners and programs and modify those as much as possible – sometimes in entrepreneurial ways -- to support the priorities established in the strategic plan. *At Barton, for example, Terry Carter was able to direct resources toward the school's literacy program by selling unused textbooks back to the publishers; and repositioning personnel to achieve greater cost savings which created greater freedom with discretionary funds.*

- **MANAGING LEGAL AND DISTRICT ISSUES TO PROTECT A FOCUS ON LEARNING**. Principals usually learn what's needed on other operational issues – including legal issues and managing their district relationships in order to protect their school's focus on its student achievement and learning goals.

E) PERSONAL LEADERSHIP. Principals set out a clear vision and relentless focus on high student achievement, build relationships and trust, and model what they are asking for from students and staff at all times. These are not leadership approaches reserved for specific meetings or instances. Rather, these principals aim to demonstrate these specific forms of leadership in every moment, every day, in every situation. And they have the emotional intelligence to understand when exercising a particular kind of leadership is likely to be important in a moment or situation.

- **HOLDS SELF ACCOUNTABLE FOR RESULTS.** The principal holds himself or herself accountable for improved results for students. The principal models the kind of personal responsibility for and sense of urgency about results that is desired in students and staff.

- **FOCUSES ON HIGH ACHIEVEMENT FOR EVERY STUDENT**. The principal focuses the entire school on student achievement by relentlessly bringing the focus of

decisions and conversations every day to high academic achievement for -- and belief in -- every student.

- ■ **BUILDS RELATIONSHIPS AND TRUST**. The principal builds relationships that are respectful and genuine. These relationships help demonstrate that individuals and their perspectives are valued in supporting the work of he school. The principal has the maturity to maintain respectful relationships even in difficult circumstances – and not take even emotional opposition personally. And often, direct conversations are a key to building trust. *For example at Fort Worthington Elementary School in Baltimore, Shaylin Todd has built trust by having tough, honest conversations about school goals with every staff member.*

- ■ **WALKS THE TALK**. The principal models the values and the expectations that students and staff are being asked to embrace. This includes seeking feedback, accepting it without defensiveness, and using it where appropriate to improve practice. It also includes being willing to do, at times, whatever task a principal would ask a team member to do.

- ■ **COMMUNICATES EFFECTIVELY**. The principal communicates clearly, listens well, and finds ways to connect most conversations and all meetings to the overall goals and values of the school.

- ■ **INITIATES DIRECT, EVEN DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS.** Once the principal has set expectations, he or she looks for frequent opportunities to provide candid, respectful feedback to team members – especially if that conversation is a difficult one.

- ■ **INSPIRES POSITIVISM AND POSSIBILITY.** While personal styles of outstanding principals differ, the principal helps set the tone of the school that is positive and full of possibility and celebration of success.

IV. BRIEF SCHOOL EXAMPLES

While the second section of this report includes several in-depth case studies, below are two other brief examples that help illustrate schools where many of the practices described above are integrated.

Monarch Academy led by Tatiana Epanchin, Oakland, California. *Unlike many principals who spend the majority of their time putting out fires and solving immediate problems, New Leaders principal Tatiana Epanchin at Monarch Academy focused proactively in all 5 of the areas described above with a relentless focus on high academic achievement for every student. This approach is particularly important in a school like Monarch where virtually all of the children are from low-income families, more than 90 percent of students are English language learners; some of whom are newcomers. And it has paid off. Monarch has shown strong, sustained academic achievement gains and last year was the most improved Title I school in the entire state of California according to the state's API index.*

Epanchin's approach is evident in every classroom. She has established a master schedule to ensure that all teachers are teaching the same curriculum, and she spends a significant portion of each day in classrooms observing teachers and providing real-time feedback to teachers. She also has created a substantial amount of time for teachers to meet together

in grade-level meetings top examine detailed data on student performance and develop appropriate interventions for struggling students.

Part of the systemic approach is establishing high expectations for student achievement and behavior. Classrooms display college banners to underscore the aspiration that every student will succeed, and Epanchin makes sure new teachers share the goal that every child will perform at high levels. Teachers, students, and their families know the expectations and act on them. Adults at Monarch spend little time correcting students as students work hard to meet the expectations that the school holds for them. The school's values have now been internalized. Her school is part of the outstanding Aspire Public Schools Network.

North Star Academy led by Paul Bambrick Santoyo, Newark New Jersey. **North Star Academy led by Paul Bambrick-Santoyo, Newark New Jersey**. *When New Leader Paul Bambrick-Santoyo became principal of North Star Academy in Newark in 2003, the school, then a middle/high school, had a strong reputation as one of the higher-achieving schools serving overwhelmingly low-income students. In 2003, the school became the centerpiece of a new outstanding school network called Uncommon Schools, a charter school management organization which provided operational support to North Star Academy and allowed Bambrick-Santoyo to focus on instructional leadership. Bambrick-Santoyo knew the school could achieve at dramatically greater levels, and he had a three-part solution: data, data, and data. Four years later, the school had the highest college matriculation rates of any non-selective high school in the state of New Jersey regardless of family income.*

Bambrick-Santoyo instituted quarterly interim student assessments, mapped to the school's scope and sequence, to provide teachers with periodic reports on student progress, and established "results meetings," where grade-level teams analyze the interim assessment results and plan interventions for students who are having trouble. He also set aside a week after each interim assessment for teachers to re-teach material for struggling students. And he and the school have continued to raise the level of rigor in the curriculum and the assessments each year. With strategic guidance from Uncommon Schools, he also constructed a dashboard set of indicators related to student and school performance that they used to monitor progress and plan improvements.

As Managing Director of the North Star network, Bambrick-Santoyo has also focused efforts on building teaching and leadership capacity at North Star. He and the leadership team interview prospective teachers multiple times and observe them in their schools. He also has developed leaders as the school has grown from a single middle school into a network that includes two middle schools, a high school, and an elementary school. The culture of high achievement is evident at all times throughout the school, including in the cafeteria every morning where all students and staff gather in a community meeting to celebrate excellence, community, and personal responsibility to the beat of African drums. Bambrick-Santoyo spends a day a week in each school's principal's office, working alongside the principals and serving as a mentor. Little wonder North Star now is a consistent 90-90-90 school, with 90 percent of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch, 90 percent minority, and 90 percent achieving proficiency.

See section three of this report and future reports for more in-depth case studies of schools and principals making dramatic achievement gains.

V. CONCLUSION

We have a long-term aspiration to transform the urban principalship in the U.S. in order to help usher in an era when every student in our nation graduates from high school ready for success in college, a career, and citizenship. In the shorter-term, we aim to help many more schools – including hundreds of low-income schools led by New Leaders principals as well as many others -- to drive dramatic gains in academic achievement. While this report is just a small step forward, we
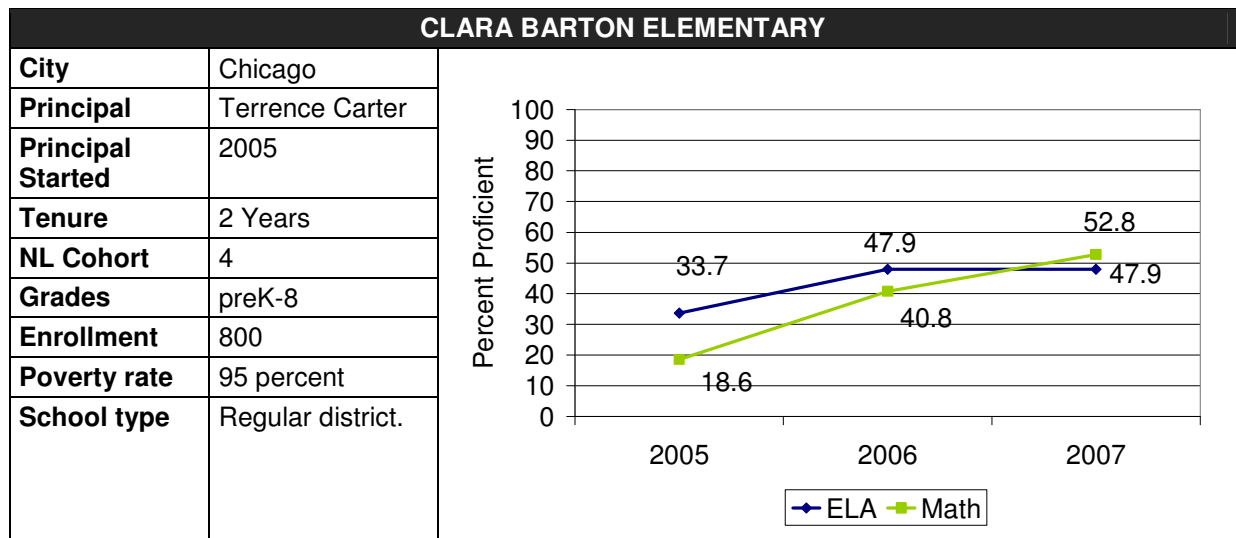
look forward to building on this work and to working with others to create research-based, actionable knowledge that can be used to create a principalship and principals that are capable of driving high levels of student achievement at scale.

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A NEW VISION AT BARTON ELEMENTARY[2]
A Case Study

This case study tells how a regular, district elementary school achieved gains in student proficiency by establishing a schoolwide vision of instruction—including the use of data to drive instruction—and by focusing on professional development, and the recruitment, nurturing, and retention of high quality teachers.

CLARA BARTON ELEMENTARY	
City	Chicago
Principal	Terrence Carter
Principal Started	2005
Tenure	2 Years
NL Cohort	4
Grades	preK-8
Enrollment	800
Poverty rate	95 percent
School type	Regular district.

On a Tuesday morning at Chicago's Clara Barton Elementary School, Harlem Winston's 6th grade class is discussing memoirs. With their desks grouped in clusters, students listen as their classmates take turns standing to read passages they've written about emotional episodes in their lives. One tells of having to move to a different home; another of seeing someone get hit by a car. With each reading, the group critiques the narrative, at one point saying it was unclear who was speaking in part of a passage. Standing in the middle of the room, Winston presses: "So what do you think she could have done to make the dialogue less confusing?" Students respond that the writer could add phrases like, 'she said,' and 'she replied,' to the quotations. At another point, when she hears background chatter, Winston stops the discussion and counts out loud, down from four. On cue, the students stop talking by the time she gets to one. Some even shush their classmates.

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[2] This case is based on a day-long visit to Barton on June 5, 2007, as well as follow-up interviews with key school leaders cited within. Some of those leaders, including the principal, later reviewed the narrative for accuracy. Jeff Archer, director of field learning at New Leaders for New Schools, served as investigator. Send comments to: jarcher@nlns.org

This is not how a lesson on writing likely would have looked at Barton a few years ago. By many accounts, teachers in the past at the school relied far more on textbooks to determine what to teach, and how. Student behavior in the school was a major problem. And understandably so: Veteran staff members say long-standing leadership tensions there left many feeling like Barton lacked focus. Peggy Zechel, a literacy coach at Barton, describes the old Barton as, "a place where you kind of bonded together and tried to get through the day." Not surprisingly, the school found itself on state and local watch-lists of low-performing schools. Then Barton got a new principal for the 2005-06 school year: Terrence Carter, a member of Cohort 4 of New Leaders for New Schools. That spring, the school made double-digit increases in the percentage points of students meeting state standards in reading and math. Despite the results that followed his arrival, Carter is quick to counter any implication that they're due simply to the presence of one person. What made the difference, he contends, were a series of practices and processes that he helped the school put in place. "You want great systems in schools," he says.

Asked what systems he instituted that most contributed to Barton's gains, he cites three areas: Establishment of a schoolwide vision of instruction, including the use of data to drive instruction; professional development; and the recruitment, nurturing, and retention of high quality teachers. At Barton now there is no question but that the approach towards the teaching of reading and writing is balanced literacy, with its distinctive components emphasizing individualized instruction and the honing of students' abilities to make their own meaning from text. In recruiting teachers, he looks for those he thinks he can coach in the teaching methods he's chosen. Those who haven't bought into his expectations he's encouraged to go to schools that are better fits for them. Meanwhile, he has significantly reallocated time and money to support teachers in their professional learning. "You've got to have the team on the train, and they have to know it's the right train," says Carter. To be sure, Barton's performance still lags behind that of the Chicago district as a whole. But Carter contends that its initial gains show evidence that it's possible to turn around a traditional district school in a short time.

Background

Clara W. Barton Elementary School serves about 800 students, grades preK-8, in a southside Chicago community of modest, neatly kept homes. The image one has upon arriving at Barton is of an older school building, surrounded by an expansive—and nearly barren—blacktop play area. All of its students are African American, and about 95 percent live in poverty. In the five years before Carter arrived, the percentages of Barton students scoring at or above national norms on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills fluctuated between 14 and 24 in math, and 24 and 28 in reading, always well below the district overall.[3] In spring 2005, when Chicago schools began to be held more accountable for their results on the Illinois Student Achievement Tests, Barton's combined proficiency rate on the ISATs for reading, math, and science in tested grades was 26.3 percent, compared with a district rate of 47.5 percent, and 69 percent for the state.

Staff who have been at Barton the longest describe a school community in which parents, students, and teachers had became increasingly stressed by outside factors over the past decade. The area that the school serves is home to two active street gangs. (Carter says the school often must literally teach survival skills, like avoiding certain neighborhood corners.) Barton's previous principal

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[3] Barton's ITBS scores from its "School Progress Report," Chicago Public Schools' Dept. of Research & Evaluation. ISAT results from Barton's Illinois School Report Card.

was in place for 12 years, the last two of which she spent at odds with her local school council, the panel of parent and community members which functions as the school's governing body. Under state and district policy, LSCs have the power to hire and fire their school's principals. By the time the principal finally departed, teachers had endured a difficult period of uncertainly, during which some staff say the school lacked focus in many areas.

Into this challenge stepped Terrence Carter, whom the LSC at Barton hired in late spring 2005. Although he'd never before been a principal, he brought with him a wealth of expertise in business and teaching, along with a personal story that greatly shapes his view of school leadership. The son of a golf course landscaper with a 6th grade education, and one of 10 children, he was raised in and near New York City. After studying economics at Rutgers and social work and public health at the University of California-Berkeley, he experienced a meteoric rise in the corporate world. He first worked for a California utility company, and then for two high-tech firms based in Silicon Valley, eventually becoming a chief learning officer, in charge of employee training across the globe. Along the way, he lived in Asia, Europe, and South America, and he earned a doctorate in organizational behavior and leadership from a program jointly run by Stanford and Oxford Universities. Despite his tremendous success, he says he remembers well the difficulties his family faced growing up; he often tells teachers not to expect parents who are working multiple jobs to show up at night meetings or volunteer at school. He says, "I tell parents, my expectation of you is to get them here, and that they be clean."

Carter made the shift to K12 education during a sabbatical. The firm where he'd been chief learning officer required that after five years with the company its executives take 12-months off to work in a nonprofit sector. He chose to return to the elementary school he had attended in Patterson, N.J. to work as a substitute teacher. Before long, he wound up taking over the second-grade class of a teacher who left for maternity leave. "I had the best time of my life," he recalls. Feeling that he'd had a positive impact on his students' learning, he decided to make the career move permanent by going through an alternative teacher certification program. Early on in his new career, his search for guidance on instruction led him to such experts as those at the Reading and Writing Project at Columbia University, whose ideas would profoundly influence his views on teaching and on teacher training.

For his residency year in New Leaders, Carter was placed at Chicago's Dodge Renaissance Academy, a preK-8 school that had been shuttered by the district for poor performance and reopened with new staff and a new governance structure. *(See New Leaders case, "Renaissance at Dodge")* Joining a new administration that was under the gun to show improvement, Carter spent his residency helping Dodge implement the elements of balanced literacy instruction—which seem to have paid off at the school, based on later results. But while Dodge was a good training ground in some respects, it differs greatly from Barton. In restructuring Dodge, the district stripped the school's local school council of its power, and handed it to an outside group—a nonprofit that runs a pre-service training program for teachers. As a result, Dodge is shielded from the politics that can plague some LSCs, and it has additional instructional staff in the form of its teachers in training. Dodge's enrollment also is about half the size of Barton's, and Dodge has received additional funding due to its special status. While proud of the work at Dodge, Carter says he sought out a school like Barton for his first principalship to show that it's possible to achieve dramatic improvement in a regular district neighborhood school. "You can make it in this traditional setting," he says.

One constant for Carter during his time at Dodge and Barton was his New Leaders coach. Debbra Lang mentored him throughout his residency, and during his first two years as a principal. Carter counts the insights he got from Lang as the most valuable thing he got from New Leaders. The two spoke several times a month, and she visited Barton frequently. Carter says Lang served as a critical, confidential sounding board, allowing him to float ideas with an experienced school leader before acting on them. Many of their conversations focused on managing the politics of school change—a skill he had little experience with. "She's been there, done it, and done it well," says Carter, who says he still seeks advice from Lang.

A schoolwide vision of instruction

When Carter arrived at Barton, he found a hodge-podge of instructional practices, and a largely demoralized staff. Zechel describes literacy instruction at Barton at the time as involving bits and pieces of different strategies, few of which were done very well. With textbooks setting the agenda, differentiation of instruction was minimal within the classroom. Struggling students tended to be pulled out of classes for extra attention. And while the school used a form of independent reading, Zechel says in practice it amounted to little more than, "pick up a book and read." Likewise, math was generally taught as concepts without context, she and others say, and there was little consistency in math programs used across the school. Some staff members even say math was barely taught at all in some classrooms. (Less that 5 percent of Barton's 8th graders met state proficiency in math on the 2005 ISAT.) But while teachers knew Barton was on watch-lists for low-performance, few had seen the school's achievement data in any detail. "It was just a lethargic attitude across the board," says Carter. "It was: 'We're low-performing, so we're never going to get any better. We don't have a plan. Why should we?' "

Barton's new principal spent his first weeks on the job working to get across the message that the school *would* improve by focusing on instruction. With the help of the assistant principal he hired, Krystal Muldrow (New Leaders Cohort 4), he disaggregated the school's achievement data and presented it to the teachers in a PowerPoint. He said he expected them to work toward getting 70 percent of students meeting state standards on the ISAT. While many gasped, he showed them that large numbers of their students had scored just below proficiency, so that with the right teaching many should get over the hump. In addition, he played them a "60-Minutes" segment on the success of the Frederick Douglass School, the high-poverty elementary school in Harlem led by celebrated educator Lorraine Monroe. Explains Carter: "Here are kids—the same kinds of kids like ours—and they are achieving at high levels." He also surveyed teachers, asking what they'd do if they could reinvent the school. Many spoke of improving student discipline. His response: "If you have them engaged, I guarantee your discipline problems will be somewhat dissipated."

Early on, Carter made a number of structural changes related to how people operated at Barton. He had teachers' desks removed from their classrooms, to create more space and encourage more active instruction. To make sure he could spend enough time observing classrooms, he instituted a policy by which he would not meet with parents during the school day. (He had them make afternoon appointments, instead). Teachers came to expect him to show up, with a tablet PC in hand, take notes on what he saw, and then send them emails with suggestions. They also learned they should have performance data with them when they spoke with him about their classrooms. Over time, he got teachers to produce their own data presentations in PowerPoint. "That was painful, because many of them had never done more than type in Microsoft Word," says Muldrow. "Some had never accessed their CPS email."

The core teaching method that the principal worked to implement was balanced literacy, which Carter had taught using for five years in New Jersey. He first came across the approach as a first-year teacher, when he was searching for teaching methods online and discovered Columbia's Reading and Writing Project, led by Lucy Calkins. "I just knew that I didn't know how to teach kids to read," he said. He took part in one of the project's summer institutes, and found a nearby school in New Jersey that was part of the initiative where he could see balanced literacy in action. His principal also arranged for Dorothy Strickland, another expert in the strategy, to work with Carter at his school. He left New Jersey convinced that done right, balanced literacy held the most promise for developing skills in reading and writing—particularly in urban schools where students reflect such a range of skill levels—because of the way it addresses each student's needs. "It meets kids where they are," he says.

Rather than work from a textbook, teachers using balanced literacy create mini-lessons on strategies and give students lots of opportunities to apply them in workshops involving small group and individual work. The emphasis is on coaching students to become increasingly independent. Balanced literacy also is a lot of work; without scripts to follow, teachers must learn to design lessons according to students' needs. The framework he had Barton adopt for balanced literacy was the same as had been used at Dodge, the "Guiding Readers" texts by Irene Fontas and Gay Pinnell. The work details the rational for and components of the workshop model of balanced literacy instruction. Given the amount of work involved, Carter decided to focus his first year on implementing the Readers Workshop model of balanced literacy, saving Writers Workshop for his second year. He also drew on the work of the Columbia project, including its curriculum calendars, which provide guidance on how instruction should develop over time in a classroom. And he made sure nonfiction reading was a significant part of the mix, believing that doing so would help students perform better in other areas, too.

But English language arts wasn't the only subject in which Carter instituted new, schoolwide instructional programs. Under him, Barton adopted common, lab-based science programs. In Social Studies, it brought in Facing History and Ourselves, which explores the issue of group identity through examinations of history and of students' own lives. He also adopted Everyday Math, which emphasizes problem-solving and real-world examples in a curriculum that spirals, so concepts are returned to multiple times, letting students deepen their understandings over time. Carter assigned the task of implementing the new math program to Muldrow, his AP, who had a stronger background in the subject than he did. (Whereas Barton had three literacy coaches, it had none in math). While coordinating training on Everyday Math, Muldrow made sure teachers spent an hour each day teaching it. "Having administration that actually went into the classroom helped that," she says. Muldrow, who took the lead on much of the school's data analysis that first year, also instituted the use of new formative exams, the Diagnostic OnLine Math Assessment, to give a quarterly snapshot of math performance. (The school used district interim assessments, as well.)

Teachers say the new instructional programs represented a major adjustment. Second grade teacher Loretta Edwards said the balanced literacy model looked nothing like how she had been teaching, nor like what she'd learned in education school. "Before, you had this program, and it told you everything you needed, and what you would do," she says. "You're so used to, 'today I'm going to teach the K, T, and S sounds.' Now, we would have the goals for the month." Staff were taken aback when Carter told them balanced literacy would require them to put in 12-hour days. That turned out to be true, particularly for the first four months, says Edwards. Parents also weren't used

to the approaches. Teachers say some questioned why their children didn't come home with textbooks or workbooks. In response, the school organized a math night, so parents could come in and learn how students were now being taught. But while the changes in instruction caused considerable angst, staff say they found it reassuring that their principal was clear about what he wanted, and that he knew the approaches he was asking them to use. Says Edwards: "He could speak personally, and when he couldn't, he brought in people from everywhere he could so they could explain it to us, so he was able to make sure we were doing it properly."

Professional development

Carter's philosophy on teacher training comes from his own experience learning to teach. His belief is that to learn new teaching methods correctly requires that teachers be taught by people who posses deep knowledge of those methods. Unfortunately, he finds that few teachers have that opportunity, particularly when it comes to teaching the critical skill of reading. The result is poor implementation. "Everyone talks about a shortage of math and science teachers," he says. "But there's a shortage of teachers knowing how to teach reading, because most people don't know how to teach a kid how to read." In Chicago, he says, he felt that people had been getting pieces of the puzzle, but not a complete picture of how to teach literacy. "[People with the district] kept calling balanced literacy guided reading," he says, noting that guided reading is one teaching method used by teachers employing balanced literacy. "I said, 'these people don't know, they have no idea.' "

At Barton, Carter began by seeking outside help to develop his in-house expertise. He found an expert in balanced literacy at the New Teachers Network, a local group that offers support programs to new teachers in area schools. Lisa Vahey, one of the network's founders, provided training on balanced literacy to his three lead literacy coaches over the summer before the start of school his first year at Barton. He arranged for them to visit Dodge Academy, to learn how the model had been put into place there the previous year. He also invited the rest of the school's teaching staff to learn some of the school's new instructional strategies in the weeks before school started. "People came in for no pay," Carter recalls. "I said, 'if you're going to be doing this, and you're going to be evaluated on this, you might want to come in and get some of this.' "

The other ingredient he needed was time to train his staff during the year. He arranged for substitutes to take over each classroom for a two-hour block each week, releasing teachers so they could meet for professional development, led mostly by his literacy coaches. Carter also stepped in to do some training himself when one of his coaches left during the school year. Schedules were arranged for the training to take place with teachers grouped in grade clusters K-2, 3-5, and 6-8. The plan proved somewhat problematic, though. While teachers learned what they needed, the students suffered as the substitutes struggled to hold down their classrooms for such a long stretch. For his second year, the principal paid teachers to stay after school once a week for training.

After relying on local experts his first year at Barton, Carter felt he needed to go further afield for his second. He arranged for four of his staff members to go to Columbia University for two weeks during the summer for training with the Readers and Writers' Project. He called it "going to Mecca." He asked Zechel to go, and three classroom teachers, representing the three different grade clusters. "I wanted the ones I knew I could get the most bang from my buck," says Carter. "They were smart, and would come back from this and be on fire." Zechel, whom Carter also would arrange to attend training with Irene Fountas at Leslie University, says that learning from the masters meant she was able to see not just the pieces of balanced literacy, but also understand all the

underpinnings that hold them together. "You kind of get lost if you don't have those cornerstones of what we are as readers," she says. Expanding on the strategy, Carter arranged for 12 teachers to go to Columbia the summer after his second year, when he allowed them to choose training on readers or writers workshop. He also sent Zechel back to Columbia for training on instructional coaching, along with another one of his literacy coaches, Marilynn Ganta.

Carrying out his professional development plans required the redirecting of resources, which Carter said he was able to do because Chicago principals have a fair amount of control over their budgets. When he got rid of teachers' desks, he sold them back to the district. He also sold the school's old textbooks back to their vendors. He used the money to purchase new materials, like classroom libraries from which students could choose books themselves—a key element of balanced literacy. The first summer that he arranged for four staff members to go to Columbia, he still was bound by the school's old budget, and only could pay their training fees; the teachers paid their travel and hotel expenses. By the following summer, however, he was able to pay the whole way for all 12 teachers who attended. He could afford such expenses, he says, by spending more prudently. Before, he contends, the school hadn't used all the federal money it was entitled to, and it sometimes bought items of questionable value, like cases of electronic microscopes that were hardly used. Another technique he used was to shift veteran, higher-salaried staff members on his budget from discretionary positions to nondiscretionary ones allocated by the district. Because the latter are covered by the district regardless of the cost of the employee, it makes sense to put one's most expensive employees in that category, when possible. "It wasn't like we got a grant or anything," he says. "It was just using the money we had, and trying to use it wisely."

Recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers

Given the high premium he puts on training and on challenging instructional approaches, Carter values teachers who are willing to learn. "If you're coachable, you'll work out here," he often tells candidates. Fortunately, many veteran teachers had left Barton during the turmoil just before he arrived, leaving relatively young staff members who weren't set in their ways. To recruit new ones, he zeros in on preservice programs that he's learned tend to graduate people with the traits he looks for: a good foundation in literacy instruction; openness to mastering new methods; the potential to become leaders themselves; commitment to working with the type of population Barton serves; and skill in analyzing data. (He gives Barton's achievement results to prospective hires to study before their interviews.) While some of those programs are traditional ones, he counts himself a fan of alternative routes to teaching, particularly those that seek people wanting to make a long-term commitment to teaching. He says he appreciates the mix of education training and life experience that such people often bring. He likes the Academy for Urban School Leadership, the teacher preparation program he saw at Dodge. He also maintains close ties with an alternative preparation program at the University of Chicago, which he says does a good job of training its candidates to diagnose and address students' needs. Both AUSL and the University of Chicago program put their candidates through year-long residencies. Most of all, he's learned that finding good people takes a lot of work. "It is literally looking for a needle in a haystack," he says.

Carter believes that retaining good people is as important as recruiting them. He is known for creating an environment that strongly supports teachers in their efforts to get behind the school's instructional vision. "The administrative staff was 100 supportive," says Edwards, the second grade teacher. "When you had a request or a question, anything you needed for this program to work, they did it." She adds that Carter has arranged for teachers working toward National Board certification

to have laptops and time to work together as they go through the process. Unlike elsewhere in the district, teachers at Barton don't have limits on using copiers—a big plus at a school where teachers are designing their own lessons. The principal regularly orders food for teachers when they stay late for planning or training. He says supporting teachers also means letting them falter, so long as they work hard to improve. "You're going to have to go along with them in this test and trial," he says. Another belief of his is that teachers should be given the chance to innovate, so long as their ideas are sound, and geared toward helping students learn. At Barton, he's let a third grade teacher create an all-boys class—a difficult experiment, but one the teacher seems to be managing. "When a teacher comes in with something, you let them try it," says Carter.

At the same time, however, the principal is more than willing to counsel out teachers that he thinks can't get behind his vision. Just being a solid teacher who can hold down a classroom isn't good enough, he says. Carter cites the example of one teacher that he let go to illustrate the point; although she was competent at running her classroom, he felt that she didn't demonstrate adequate commitment to developing her practice in the methods being implemented at Barton. "She'll do fine in a lot of the 500 or so schools that are in Chicago," Carter says. "It's just not a good fit for Barton." Carter also has dismissed teachers who couldn't gain control of their classrooms. In Chicago, principals can easily remove nontenured teachers through a process called 'clicking'; Carter clicked eight teachers his first year at Barton, out of a total teaching staff of about 45. "It allows the principal to formulate his or her organization to where he wants to go, like a CEO does," says Carter. More seasoned ones have been convinced to go elsewhere. "We've been able to do it without blame or judgment," says Patricia Dougherty, who became Barton's assistant principal when Muldrow left to take over her own school and who also is a New Leaders principal.

Looking ahead

Barton has made notable progress in a short time, as reflected in its performance, and in the improved school culture many of its staff members describe. Results from the 2006 administration of the Illinois Standards Achievement Tests showed Barton outpacing the district as a whole in terms of gains in most grades and subjects—and in some areas significantly so. For instance, 69 percent of tested eighth graders at the school met or exceeded state standards in reading that spring, a 27 percentage point gain over the year before; at the same grade level, the gain for the district was 13 percentage points, from about 60 to 72.[45] In math, the percentage of Barton eighth graders meeting state standards skyrocketed from less than 5 to 48 in the same period. Carter attributes the huge jump in math not just to the school's new math programs, but also to its work on literacy. "Because of balanced literacy, we got them reading," he says. "And when they were able to read, they were better able to do math." Results from 2007 showed continued gains in math, although a leveling off in reading. School leaders were still analyzing the results at the time this case was drafted. Beyond the numbers, they say they see the evidence of improvement in the work that students are producing. Says Harlem Winston, the sixth grade teacher whose students were working on their memoirs: "I remember when you couldn't get a kid to write a paragraph, and now they're writing

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[4] Comparing ISAT scores from 2005 to 2006 is difficult, as Illinois went from testing grades 3, 5, & 8 in 2005 to testing grades 3-8 the following year, plus the state made other changes in its assessments at the same time. Still, as noted, Barton showed greater gains than CPS as a whole in grades tested both years.

[5] Grade level proficiency rates discussed here may not match results in the chart on page one of this case, as the data in the chart represent aggregate numbers, not just one grade.
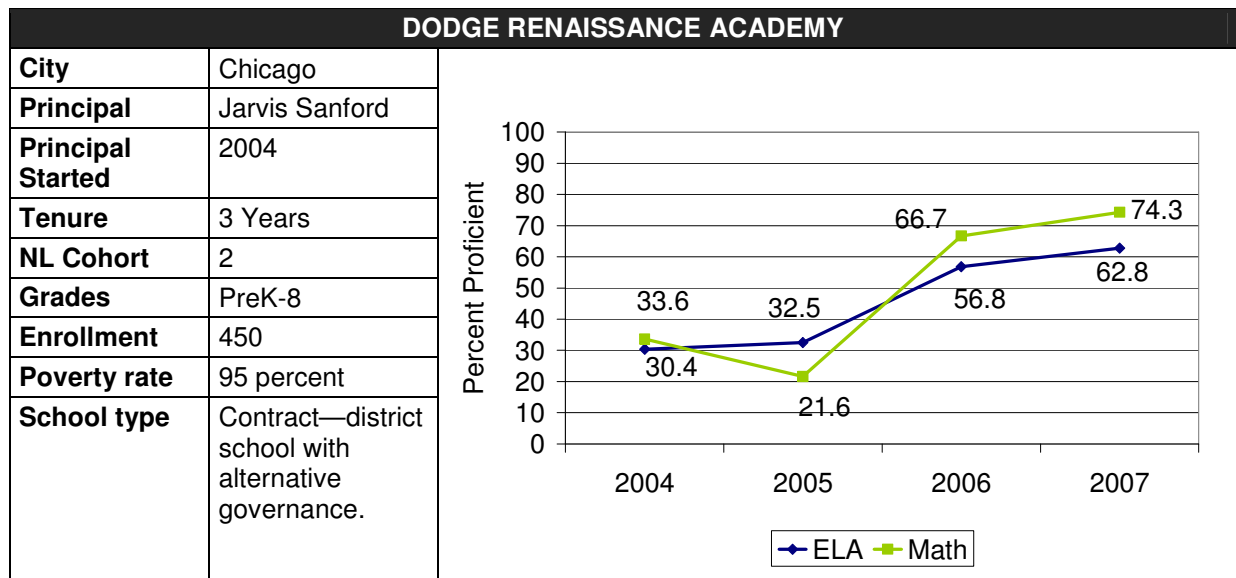
two or three pages on something." Carter and others say they know that the gains are in part because Barton started so far behind. But they also say they're convinced they're on the right track.

To take Barton to the next level, Carter says he plans to refine and enhance the strategies that he's used thus far. For his third year, he's arranging for professional development to be more differentiated and teacher led. Those who now have a good grounding in balanced literacy needn't get the same training as new teachers coming into the school, he says. Teachers are forming themselves into new study groups so they can work together on tackling instructional issues. "They'll now choose what it is they want to go deeper in," says Carter. He also plans to greatly hone their ability to use data, an effort he began ramping up in the middle of the 2006-07 school year, when he formed a data team of teachers who received training by Mark Murphy of New Leaders for New schools on how to analyze performance, mostly in math. By fall 2007, he plans to put up a data wall at the school, showing student results. Despite the in-house expertise he's developed, Carter thinks it's still important to continue to send teachers to learn from the masters. Indeed, when asked recently what it would take to achieve proficiency for all children at Barton, he drew up a plan that included sending all of Barton's teachers and instructional coaches to Columbia.

One wholly new strategy he plans to embark on relates to discipline. When it comes to student behavior, Carter favors a balance between rules and self-monitoring, as evidenced when Barton opens its doors each morning. He plays music—usually jazz—over the public address system; if students are talking too loud to hear it, they're told to lower their voices. "I'm not into all this suspension discipline," he says. "It doesn't work … if it's not internal, then it's all for hell." His approach to dealing with problems his first two years focused largely on counseling; he hired a dean of students, who worked to resolve conflicts and who visited families in their homes. While such strategies continue, he recently brought in Carol Lieber, a nationally known consultant who helps schools create systems that promote positive behavior. Barton plans ongoing work with Lieber in the 2007-08 school year. Explains Dougherty: "What we feel we need is a conversation around the school on how kids need to behave, and what does it look like, to model it, and teach it." With such efforts, Carter hopes to bring Barton closer to his vision for how the school ought to function. He often says he expects it to take four years to get there. If so, Barton is at the halfway mark. Staff members agree that while the school is in a far better place than it was, it still has much work ahead. "We've turned this clump of coal into a lump of a diamond," says Edwards. "And now we need to cut it, and refine it."

RENAISSANCE AT DODGE[6]
A Case Study

This case study tells how a restructured, district elementary school achieved significant gains in student proficiency by focusing on order, the hiring and development of talented teachers, and standards-based instruction.

DODGE RENAISSANCE ACADEMY

City	Chicago
Principal	Jarvis Sanford
Principal Started	2004
Tenure	3 Years
NL Cohort	2
Grades	PreK-8
Enrollment	450
Poverty rate	95 percent
School type	Contract—district school with alternative governance.

Percent Proficient chart (2004–2007):
ELA: 30.4 (2004), 32.5 (2005), 56.8 (2006), 62.8 (2007)
Math: 33.6 (2004), 21.6 (2005), 66.7 (2006), 74.3 (2007)

Visitors to the preK-8 Dodge Renaissance Academy in Chicago often remark about the school's morning ritual. A few minutes before 9 a.m. each day, Principal Jarvis Sanford (New Leaders Cohort 2) walks onto the school's playground and holds up one hand. Teachers on duty outside follow suit. At the signal, basketballs and jump ropes are put aside, and students fall in line at designated spots behind their teachers. Within about two minutes, everyone is in place, after which classes are sent off to their rooms in columns. While other schools attempt a similar procedure, at Dodge it takes place with barely a word spoken by adults or children, except for Sanford saying, "Good morning everybody," before sending them off. Carried out in the same manner every morning of the year, the exercise is aimed at getting students settled down and in learning mode as quickly as possible. Says

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[6] This case study is based on a day-long visit to Dodge June 4, 2007, as well as follow-up interviews with key school leaders cited within it. Some of those leaders, including the principal, later reviewed the narrative for accuracy. Jeff Archer, director of field learning at New Leaders for New Schools, served as investigator. Send comments to: jarcher@nlns.org

Sarah Zablotny, a math teacher at the school: "As a teacher, it means the first 10 minutes of class are productive."

Not long ago, Dodge was a very different place. In 2002, it became one of three buildings in the Chicago Public Schools that district CEO Arne Duncan closed for low performance, a move that sparked protest by union leaders and some community members. As an early part of what Chicago Mayor Richard Daley would call the Renaissance 2010 initiative, Dodge and one of the other schools would get new staff and new governance structures. (The third was not reopened due to declining enrollment.) But even such drastic measures did not ensure immediate success, and Dodge went through significant leadership turnover after it opened its doors again in fall 2003. By most accounts, the school got on track in 2004, with the arrival of Principal Sanford. Two years later, Dodge reportedly posted the greatest gains of any elementary school in Chicago on the state's student assessments, a major achievement for a school where almost all of the students are from low-income families.[7]

Asked how he thinks his school accomplished such improvement, Sanford cites three levers: order, the hiring and development of talented teachers, and standards-based instruction. Dodge is explicit about its expectations for behavior, and relentless in consistently holding students to them. In recruiting teachers, the principal looks far and wide, and he scrutinizes candidates closely to find the right fit. He's also willing to encourage staff members who aren't performing exceptionally to move on. Meanwhile, professional collaboration is a way of life at Dodge, where the weekly schedule provides multiple opportunities for teachers to learn and problem solve with each other—opportunities that staff have used to greatly hone their literacy and math instruction. Together, these efforts are aimed at fostering an environment that sends a clear message that Dodge is a place for learning—both for students and adults. "This doesn't just happen," says Sanford of that environment. "It's created."

Background

Sitting in Chicago's west side neighborhood of East Garfield Park, Dodge serves about 450 students. All but 2 percent are African American. At the time that CEO Duncan targeted the school for closure in the 2001-02 school year, three quarters of its students were scoring below national norms in math on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills; on the reading ITBS, about 85 percent were not scoring at national norms.[8] On both, the school's results were well below district averages. Even still, the decision to overhaul the school was met with stiff resistance. The Chicago Teachers Union, which complained it hadn't been given advance warning of the action, protested the decision before the district's school board and sought unsuccessfully to win a court injunction to stop the closure of Dodge and the other two schools.[9]

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[7] Tracy Dell Angela, "City grade schools shine on tests," Chicago Tribune, March 6, 2007
[8] Performance and data throughout this case are from Dodge's "School Progress Report" from the CPS Dept. of Research & Evaluation, the school's "Illinois School Report Card," and other state and district documents. Note: Scores for 2002, which came after Duncan announced his plans for Dodge did show the school having boosted the percent of its students scoring at or above national norms that year, by about 10 percentage points in reading and about 1.5 percentage points in math.
[9] Grant Pick, "Duncan puts new emphasis on 'business of education," Catalyst Chicago, June 2003.

Under the district's plan, Dodge would reopen after one year.[10] Although in the same building, the school would have a completely new staff and new management. Traditional CPS schools are individually governed by their own committees of parents and community members, called local school councils, who hire and can fire the principal. Instead, the new Dodge would be governed by an outside group that contracted with the district. That group would be the Academy for Urban School Leadership, a local nonprofit founded in 2001 to provide an alternative preparation program for teachers, in which candidates undergo year-long residencies in classrooms with master educators.[11] (Jennifer Henry, New Leaders Cohort 1, served as AUSL's first executive director) In essence, the board of AUSL then replaced the local school council at Dodge. At the same time, Dodge became the second Chicago school to serve as a training site for AUSL candidates.

The school's rebirth did not get off to a smooth start. Its first principal left within a few months after the school reopened, after which the assistant principal was given the job. Then that administrator departed at the end of the first school year. Anxious to get the school on the right path, the AUSL board asked Jarvis Sanford to take over in the summer of 2004. Sanford had by then spent a year as principal of another CPS school, where he had hired a number of graduates of the AUSL program. As he recalls, the stakes were high for everyone in the Dodge community when he came on board. District leaders had closed the school with the promise that it would improve. The Academy for Urban School Leadership needed to show that it could be a good steward of the school. And parents were desperate for stability after seeing their school first shut down for a year, and then wind up with three principals by the beginning of its second year after reopening. "There was a big spotlight on this school to do well, and it wasn't," says Sanford.

A native Alabaman who grew up in Detroit, Sanford brought with him a mix of experiences in business, higher education, and K-12 education. He started out in real estate, earned an M.B.A. from Northern Illinois University, and worked for the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, where he ran student residential-life programs and led training for the office of affirmative action. Having enjoyed working with young people, he went on to earn a doctorate in curriculum and instruction from Northern Illinois, and completed an alternative teacher certification program. He first taught in a Chicago suburb, then moved to CPS, where he taught the 5th, 7th and 8th grades. He applied for, and was accepted into the second cohort of the New Leaders for New Schools training program after a friend showed him a newspaper article about it.

For his New Leaders residency, he was assigned to the Chicago's Burnham/Anthony elementary school, which consists of four separate buildings at different sites, but all under one administrator. Put in charge of the building for grades 3-5, Sanford found himself functioning essentially as a principal that year, hiring many teachers and organizing professional development for his staff. Although a challenging initiation at time, the experience—and the level of responsibility he had—showed him what matters most in moving a school toward higher performance, he said. "What I learned is it's all about human relationships, about building the capacity of people, and inspiring them, and wanting them to do a good job that creates a climate that will take a school to another level," he says. He adds: "If you can't inspire people to want to work, it's all for naught." From

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[10] Michelle Galley, "Chicago to Close Three Failing Schools," Education Week, April 24, 2002; Beatriz Cholo and Lori Olszewski, "On the Road to Reform; Ailing schools aim for 'renaissance; Shut 2 years ago, they're rebounding," Chicago Tribune, June 20, 2004.
[11] "Teacher prep program eases path to certification for career changers," Catalyst Chicago, March 2003.

Burnham/Anthony, Sanford was hired as principal at Wendall Smith Elementary, where he spent a year before coming to Dodge.

Dodge enjoys a number of advantages due to its unusual status within CPS. Sanford says that reporting to AUSL instead of to a local school council means he doesn't have to expend as much energy educating his employers on the rationale for his school improvement strategies. It also minimizes the chances that he'll have to contend with the kind of local politics than can plague some LSCs. Meanwhile, AUSL and its backers have the clout to help him when he needs outside support. As a teacher training site for the academy, Dodge also gets additional money for professional development for its staff. And it means Dodge has 16 extra people in its classrooms, in the form of its residents; while those still are teachers in training, they can give added attention to students and fill in as substitutes when regular teachers are in professional development. The district also gave the school building some upgrades when it became part of the Renaissance program. And Dodge is part of a district initiative that gives low-performing schools additional money to hold Saturday classes during the winter, leading up to spring state testing.

Some observers question whether such advantages explain the bulk of Dodge's improvement of late. Others point to the recent gentrification of some of the surrounding neighborhood, and claim that the changing demographics are the cause. But while the closing of Dodge for a year did displace students—some of whom chose not to return, and whose spots were then filled by others—95 percent of those at the school now are from families whose incomes are low enough to qualify them for subsidized lunches. And although the school has clearly benefited from its relationship with AUSL and the district's Renaissance initiative, the fact that the school's first year after its reopening was so rocky suggests those factors alone were not sufficient to turn things around. (Moreover, the other Chicago school that was closed and reopened at the same time as Dodge faired poorly just as Dodge began to take off.) Sanford and his team contend that what made the difference at Dodge were a series of thoughtful, strategic decisions that changed the school's culture.

Order

Maintaining order was one of the two top objectives that Sanford set for his leadership team when he arrived in July of 2004. (The other was creating high-quality professional development for teachers.) For him, order is a means to an end, and that end is student learning. As he says: "With that, you get to teach more." Before school began his first year at Dodge, he made sure the school spelled out its expectations for student behavior, down to how the classes should walk in lines in the hallways. Clear consequences for infractions also were laid out. It took about a week for students to learn the morning line-up ritual. Lou Bradley, the school's literacy coach and a member of his core leadership team, said that some staff at first didn't agree with all the regimentation, but that Sanford made his case. Too many schools, he says, waste instructional time getting kids back in order. Plus, he says, a structured environment sends the message to kids that they're at school to learn.

While Sanford says that clear procedures and policies are essential for creating order, he also says those are only effective if followed with absolutely consistency. He gives an example from the end of the past school year, when a number of students were not showing up in their uniforms: Whereas other schools might have shrugged off the behavior during the last days of school, Sanford required the students to sit in the cafeteria until school started (instead of playing outside), after which he took them to the main office and called their parents. "If I were to let them slide by, then you'd have a whole school who'd say 'he's not serious.' " The principal believes his morning line-up is so

orderly because it takes place the same way every day throughout the year, with him leading it. Were he to let others stand in for him frequently, he thinks the order would be lost.

Modeling is another key ingredient to Dodge's well-disciplined environment. Sanford has instituted a dress code for teachers. (No jeans, for instance.) When he consistently enforces expectations for student behavior, he's sending a message to staff members that they should do the same, he says. He also does so in a respectful manner; he usually says "thank you so much," when students comply with his orders. He often fills in as a substitute teacher, making the point that people are expected to pitch in however they can. "If I have to sweep I sweep; if I have to serve lunch I serve lunch," he says. "And so I expect you to be invested enough to go the extra mile." At Dodge, then, teachers say they now don't hesitate to address problems involving students other than their own. Says Zablotny, the math teacher: "If kids are talking in the hallway, that affects my class, too. ... You have to buy into that culture."

Recruitment and development of talented teachers

Sanford sees many principals who've come up through the ranks in K12 education as having the view that teachers either know what to do or they don't. His own belief, shaped by his work outside the field, is that a leader should hire smart people who love professional development, give them lots of opportunities to grow, and then do everything possible to support their efforts. When he can, he tries to hire people who, like himself, have experience in both education and other fields. "So much of this is just identifying really good talent, and empowering them to do whatever it takes," he says. "And I think the job of the principal is to remove the obstacles to success." He can cite numerous times when he's let teachers run with an idea for improving instruction. Too often, he says, such teachers feel stifled in schools. "I'm not intimidated by smart people," he says. Evidence that he tries to make teachers feel supported is seen in how he rearranged his budget to provide them all with laptop computers.

At the same time, he holds his staff to a high standard. Sanford tells prospective hires Dodge isn't a good place for teachers looking to get their work done between 8:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. He expects them to spend extra time collaborating with their colleagues and serving students after school, such as by tutoring or leading sports. He wasn't impressed with many of the teachers he inherited when he took over Dodge in 2004. Three years later, only a handful of the teachers on staff when he arrived remain. He used a variety of methods to make the changes. Under a process known as "clicking," Chicago principals can easily remove nontenured teachers at the end of the school year. He also "counseled out" some more veteran teachers. But many teachers opted on their own to go elsewhere after seeing his expectations. "I create an environment where teachers select out," he says.

To fill vacancies, Dodge casts a wide net. Sanford said he hasn't found job fairs to be especially fruitful. Instead, he has relied to a great extent on the RISE Network, the San Francisco-based nonprofit that matches teachers wanting to serve at-risk students with urban schools that have supportive leadership. He tries to zero in on educators from districts that he believes have done a good job developing their teachers, like Atlanta and New York City. (He hasn't considered Chicago in that category.) Many recruits he learns about through word of mouth, and local ones he'll observe in their schools. Over time, more teachers from other schools have sought him out. He has candidates come to Dodge to teach a demo lesson to students while he and three or four staff

members look on; after the lessons, they interview the potential hires on their demonstrations and on their teaching craft in general. "I'll do anything to get a good teacher," says the principal.

Dodge teachers spend considerable time on professional development. Elsewhere in Chicago, teachers get a minimum allotment of a 50-minute prep period three or four times a week, and those prep periods aren't always scheduled to let teachers at the same grade levels plan together. At Dodge, teachers at each grade level have common prep periods five days a week. As a training site for the Academy for Urban School Leadership, Dodge also has two weekly 90-minute training sessions after school, for which teachers get a 20-percent salary bump. His second year at Dodge, Sanford also reworked the schedule to work in weekly meetings during the school day for each teaching cluster (those at grades K-2, 3-5, and 6-8.) He says he did so without adding to the budget; instead, many of his ancillary staff members made concessions, such as the gym teacher who agreed to teach two classes at the same time. Meanwhile, he arranges for groups of teachers to periodically visit other classrooms in the school. In the 2006-7 school year Dodge also began video-taping its teachers, providing another chance for them to see each other in action. Says Bradley: "We got the chance to not just go wide, but also deep with what we did. Often that's a problem with PD: You touch on the surface, and you're not able to work out the kinks."

Along with the added time, leaders at Dodge have worked to cultivate a culture that puts a high premium on professional development and collaboration. Sanford sits alongside his teachers in their training, both so he knows what to look for when he visits their classrooms—which he does daily—and to make it clear that he sees such training as critically important. At the same time, professional development has evolved at Dodge. At first, it was aimed at infusing common understandings about skills—like how to teach reading—across the school. But over time, school leaders say it has become more teacher-driven and more tailored to teachers' individual needs. Together, these opportunities have resulted in a school in which many say that teachers now take the initiative for helping each other succeed. Said Brenda Adams, a first year teacher who came to the profession following a career in television production: "It's almost like they are of the mind that they don't think they can be successful if I'm not."

Standards-based instruction: literacy

Sanford is a firm believer in balanced literacy, the instructional approach that seeks to develop students' abilities to make their own meaning from text along with their more mechanical skills, like deciphering words. When instruction focuses too much on the latter—usually with basal reading books with scripted exercises—he thinks that neither teachers nor students are adequately challenged. "Basals make teachers lazy," he contends. "If you keep with a basal, teachers will just say 'It's day 100, turn to page 101,' and they won't learn how to improve their craft. What you need is to learn your students, learn your craft, and then combine them to meet their needs." But he also recognizes that balanced literacy is difficult to master. Without a script to follow, teachers must be nimble with their students and create their own lessons, albeit based on a set of general models.

Fortunately, upon coming to Dodge the principal was immediately able to bring on two instructional leaders well steeped in the approach. One was his literacy coach, Lou Bradley, a veteran Chicago educator who had trained him when he was a fifth-grade teacher and she was a professional developer for the Chicago Area Writing Project. The other was Terrence Carter, a former business executive who had become a New Jersey public school teacher and who came to work under Sanford at Dodge as a resident in Cohort 4 of the New Leaders for New Schools principal

preparation program. In previous jobs, Bradley and Carter each had learned balanced literacy from some of the most preeminent experts in the field. The two also complimented each other well: Carter had taught in the early grades, while Bradley's experience was more at the middle school level.

As a framework for organizing their efforts they choose the "Guiding Readers" texts by Irene Fountas & Gay Pinnell. The books outline the key balanced literacy strategies the school would use with students, the focus of which are workshops that include daily hour-long blocks with mini-lessons, followed by the application of strategies by students in small-group reading, independent reading, and large group discussions. (At Dodge, teacher-created posters of those strategies now cover the walls.) The workshops also entail half-hour blocks for developing word study skills, like how to form plurals. With Carter and Bradley leading the training, Dodge used its twice-weekly afterschool professional development periods that first year to "synchronize" the school's teachers so they were using the same methods, says Bradley. (They decided to concentrate on Readers' Workshop their first year, leaving the Writers' Workshop components to the following year.) "It was: here's the framework, these are the elements of the framework, this is the pedagogy, this is the research behind it," she says. Merely adopting those elements is a considerable undertaking, she adds. Not only must teachers learn to assess and address each student's reading level so they can group them homogenously for guided reading work, but they also must teach students how to gauge their own abilities so they can pick appropriate texts for independent reading. That also means teachers need the materials and know-how to create appropriate classroom libraries.

Signs that the literacy strategy was working came at the end of Sanford's first year, when the portion of Dodge students scoring above national norms on the ITBS reading test jumped to 41.6 percent, from 31.6 percent the previous year. But school leaders knew they still had to do better, and they thought they saw a key weakness in Dodge's scores on the Illinois Standards Achievement Test, which had been given greater weight for accountability purposes in Chicago starting in spring of 2005. That year, just 27.5 percent of Dodge's third graders had met or exceeded state standards in reading, as had 23.5 percent of fifth graders. More than the ITBS, the state test emphasized extended response questions that asked students to read passages and then write about conclusions drawn from them. Dodge students weren't doing well on those items. Recalls Bradley: "I'd felt that if we taught reading really well, our kids would write extended responses well, and that was not the case the first year."

So in its second year after Sanford arrived, Dodge devoted much of its professional development time to training on how to teach students to write good extended responses. That meant going beyond the instructional models in the literacy framework laid out the previous year, and having teachers teach students some highly explicit strategies for discerning what a question was asking, and for constructing a convincing and articulate response. Bradley admits some initial discomfort at the formulaic nature of the instruction. She didn't want to fall into the trap of teaching to the test, she says. She adds that many students themselves were initially resistant, and teachers had to work hard to make the practice engaging. But she also saw that the skills they were teaching were important for students to learn. And in spring 2006, Dodge saw clear evidence that its students were learning them. The percentage of its third graders meeting or exceeding state standards on the ISAT that year jumped to 46.8, from 27.5; at the fifth grade level, it rose to 37.5, from 23.5.[12] "I don't

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[12] Comparing ISAT scores from 2005 to 2006 is difficult, as Illinois went from testing grades 3, 5, & 8 in 2005 to testing grades 3-8 the following year, plus the state made other changes in its assessments at the same time. In addition, CPS as a whole saw significant gains that year. However, Dodge's were far greater.

regret doing that," says Bradley of the school's work on extended response. "If you want to be a good teacher, the kids become your curriculum, and you follow their lead."

Standards-based instruction: math

With so much on the school's plate during Sanford's first year, improving math instruction at Dodge didn't get a high priority early on. Dodge did adopt schoolwide textbooks in math, but the subject wasn't a major focus of professional development. "We started out just working on the routines, order, and creating systems, and coupled that with the reading," says the principal. "There's only so much time." Sanford faced another challenge in trying to improve math: When he arrived, all classrooms at Dodge were self-contained. That meant that even at the higher grade levels students had the same teacher teaching them all subjects, regardless of whether that teacher had a particular strength in them. Transitioning to a more departmentalized structure in the middle and upper grades has been a multi-year process, and has required the hiring of teachers with expertise in subjects other than literacy. Not surprisingly, Dodge actually experienced a dip in math scores on the ITBS in the first year after Sanford arrived—from 27.1 percent of students scoring above national norms in 2004 to 23.9 percent in 2005.

Going into his second year at Dodge, Sanford hired someone who would do much to change that: Sarah Zablotny. An English major as an undergrad at the University of Chicago, she had wanted to be a magazine journalist until she worked briefly at her college's alumni publication. Her entree to teaching was the Academy for Urban School Leadership, which she joined for the program's inaugural year. She did her residency at AUSL's first training site, the Chicago Academy, and taught two years at another Chicago school before coming to Dodge. Despite her interest in writing and literature, she'd always been comfortable with math. She took college-level math in middle and high school, later tutored students in math over the summer, and earned a math teaching endorsement after completing her AUSL training. She knows many teachers don't feel the same about the subject, and so few teach concepts well. "They get bogged down in getting the right answer," she says, adding the result can be students feel they're either good or bad at it. When she first started teaching the subject to eighth graders at Dodge, she says, "They hated math."

Zablotny was at Dodge just a few months when she saw an opportunity for teachers there to improve their math instruction. During one of the periodic classroom walkthroughs the school arranges for teachers, she and another math teacher, Chris Bruggeman, noticed how Dodge teachers were scoring answers to math problems that asked for extended responses. While the state of Illinois has a rubric for assessing answers to such problems, the two saw that at Dodge it wasn't being used consistently or correctly. Knowing that the newly emphasized ISAT tested students not just on computation, but also on their ability to explain their mathematical reasoning in writing, Zablotny and her colleague volunteered to lead workshops on teaching how to do extended responses in math. They had teachers work through such problems themselves, coming up with strategies for students to use in analyzing the questions and solving them. In cluster meetings they brought in actual student responses to score together using the state's rubric. The work appeared to pay off: The performance of Dodge students skyrocketed on the spring 2006 ISAT in math.[13] At the third grade level, the percentage of students meeting or exceeding state standards jumped from 19.5 to

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[13] Grade level proficiency rates discussed here may not match results in the chart on page one of this case, as the data in the chart represent aggregate numbers, not just one grade.

72.3; at the fifth grade, it rose from 30 to 62.5.[14] Zablotny says the episode also demonstrates her principal's leadership style. "Dr. Sanford is good at listening to teachers, and when a couple of us raised a red flag about this, he made it a priority."

But the mastery of extended responses was just the beginning. At the end of Zablotny's first year at Dodge, she helped begin to tackle a lack of alignment between what teachers were teaching and what students needed to learn at each level. "They didn't have a really strong sense of, 'this is a third grade concept, or this is a fourth grade concept,' " she says. So the school went about unpacking the state's math standards. For the last 10 weeks of that school year, one teacher from each grade at Dodge was released from classes one day a week so they could review the standards together and come up with common definitions of the knowledge, understanding, and reasoning that students would need to acquire to master them. In doing so, she says, teachers also could see how to adjust their instructional vocabulary to better match the state's assessments—for instance, using "substitute," instead of "plug in." The next step was to create assessments teachers could use throughout the year to gauge student progress on those. A group of teachers, including Zablotny, spent much of that summer creating enough items for 20 to 30 short assessments that teachers at each grade level could give to students approximately every two weeks throughout the next year.

As they soon realized, even that work wasn't enough. In the fall of 2006, by which time Zablotny had become math coordinator at Dodge, teachers started using the assessments they created and found their students weren't doing well. The problem, she says, was that there was no guarantee that students had been taught all of the concepts on each of the assessments by the time they were tested. "We kind of had to take a step back and ask what we were teaching when," she says. At the time, teachers were following the sequence of instruction in the textbook series that the school had adopted, which was among a few endorsed by the Chicago district. Zablotny then led teachers in the mapping of those textbooks to the state standards, and discovered significant mismatches. In response, teachers decided that in fall 2007 they would use a different math series, Everyday Math, which also was recommended by the district, but was better aligned with state expectations. They also mapped out pacing guides showing what teachers at each level should cover in each two-week period; they left enough flexibility so they could then fill in their own daily schedules. In spring 2007, Zablotny also led the revision of the school's interim assessment items, based on feedback from teachers. Dodge will be using the revised assessments and the new pacing guides in the 2007-08 school year, so any effect they might have on the school's test results won't show up until that spring. But in the meantime, preliminary results from spring 2007 suggest that the early work of unpacking the standards and piloting the interim assessments already has had a positive impact.
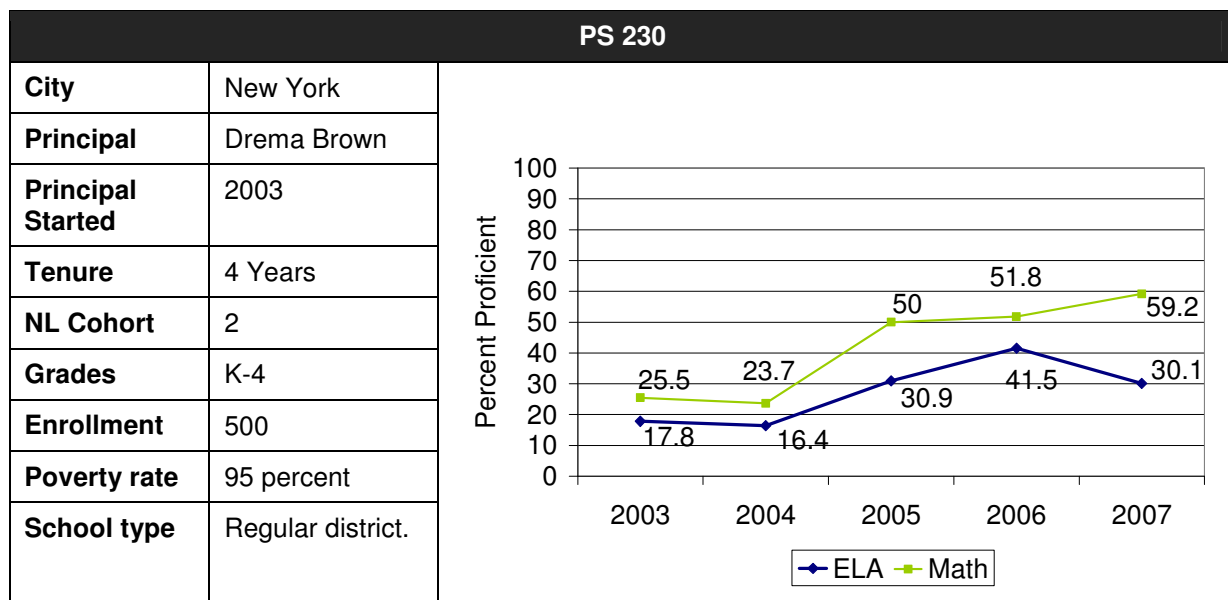
Looking ahead

Despite his school's impressive gains, Sanford knows that Dodge has lots of work to do before it can ensure that all of its students are proficient. In literacy and math, he says, teachers have a good handle on what students need to learn and how to teach it. What's still needed, he says, are effective interventions for children who are still struggling. "We're not as adept at being able to follow up and give them the assistance they need," he says. "Once a teacher has taught a concept and a student has not mastered it, then what?" One strategy he plans for 2007-08 is to use a teacher's aide who is a math major to work with struggling students individually and in small groups. After focusing its

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[14] See Note 7 on comparing 2005 and 2006 ISAT scores.

professional development on literacy and math for the past three years, he says it's time to strengthen instruction in science and social studies. He also has plans to expand efforts he began in the 2006-07 school year to teach parents how to be supportive of their children's learning. But while recognizing that Dodge isn't yet where it needs to be, Sanford says it's clearly in a different place than it was. "Dodge is in transition from going from good to great," says Sanford. "We've had a hugely successful run at helping children understand and appreciate what school is all about as a neighborhood school."

THE NEW NORMAL AT PS 230[15]
A Case Study

This case study tells how a regular, district elementary school achieved gains in student proficiency by focusing on collaborative planning and training among teachers, performance monitoring, and on addressing students' social-emotional needs.

PS 230		
City	New York	
Principal	Drema Brown	
Principal Started	2003	
Tenure	4 Years	
NL Cohort	2	
Grades	K-4	
Enrollment	500	
Poverty rate	95 percent	
School type	Regular district.	

In a meeting room off the main office at PS 230 in the Bronx, five of the school's leaders are gathered around a table. The group is made up of the elementary school's two assistant principals, its literacy coach, its math coach, and its principal, Drema Brown, a member of New Leaders for New Schools' cohort two. Together, they're reviewing an interim assessment series they're considering using to gauge student progress the following year. Along with the tests, they have with them copies of the state's student standards, and criteria for judging the usefulness of such assessments developed by Paul Bamrick-Santoyo, another New Leaders principal and a leader of Northstar Academy in Newark, N.J. "I want you to take a look at the questions, and see if it matches what you did this year," Brown says. For more than an hour they pore over the materials, discussing their

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[15] This case study is based on a day-long visit to PS 230 June 12, 2007, as well as follow-up interviews with key school leaders cited within it. Jeff Archer, director of field learning at New Leaders for New Schools, served as investigator. Readers are encouraged to send comments to: jarcher@nlns.org.

merits. They look at online tools they can use to analyze the results. Ms. Hackshaw-Smith, the math coach, notes several questions on measurement, a weak point for the school. "I'm really liking the math," she says. "It's a bit more difficult, and there are a variety of questions."

Such collaboration was anything but the norm at the New York City school four years ago. When Brown arrived in the summer of 2003, she found as dysfunctional an environment as one can imagine at a school. Staff members sometimes insulted each other at meetings. Students roamed the halls. So did parents, a few in their bathrobes, and a few high on drugs. "I had never seen an elementary school like this before," recalls Brown. Results on state tests administered a few months after she got there put the school on a watch-list for possible state intervention. Then, things began looking up the following year. Proficiency rates more than doubled in 2005 in English language arts and in math, and they continued to rise in 2006. The improvement was enough to take the school off of the state's watch list. The school still has far to go before it can ensure that all its students meet high standards, but Brown and her team contend that they have laid the foundation it needs to move forward. Managing the school is no longer a matter of triage. "We're at a place now where you can successfully address issues and lay out a course," says Brown.

Asked how PS230 got there, the principal stresses three areas of focus: collaborative planning and training among teachers; performance monitoring; and addressing students' social-emotional needs; From day one, she has sought to establish norms for how people operate in her school. Working together, teachers have produced common lesson units, curriculum calendars, and rubrics for assessing student writing. Along with the grade-level teams typical of many schools, PS 230 has created a special team of teachers to introduce new teaching methods in the school. It also employs an array of schoolwide tools to track progress, including student surveys and portfolios of data kept for regular review by staff and students. Meanwhile, the school has created standards for student behavior, and teams of staff members to help students with non-academic issues. To do all this, Brown has rearranged schedules, reallocated dollars, tapped external expertise, and moved out staff who didn't buy in to the new norms. She says her overriding goal has been, "getting teachers to really have rich conversations with each other about their students' work, and having the right people in place."

Background

Also known as Roland N. Paterson Elementary, PS 230 serves approximately 500 students in grades K-4. About 85 percent are from low-income families, 55 percent are African-American, and 40 percent Latino. The building, which it shares with a grade 5-8 school, sits literally on a bridge over a rail line and a highway that run along the eastern edge of the Bronx. Catty-corner to it loom the twin buildings of the River Park Towers, an apartment complex that rises more than 40 stories and looks like something out of the "Empire Strikes Back." The towers are home to a majority of the students who attend the school. The building that PS 230 occupies was not meant to be a school. While there's some debate as to its original intent, from the outside it resembles a government-built office building. It has no playground. Inside, it's arranged in an open-classroom format, without walls between classes. A popular design in the 1970s, Brown says it's a big problem for a school with a high concentration of students with severe emotional and behavioral problems. Disruptions in one class affect many others. "That's my screamer," Brown tells a visitor in her office one day, as a student's cries filled the halls.

By the time Brown arrived, PS 230 had endured a long period of leadership turnover. (In one year, four people had served as its principal.) The result was a near complete lack of consistency, says Rowena Penn-Jackson, a veteran teacher at the school whom Brown would tap as a math coach and later as assistant principal. "Everyone was in their own world," she recalls. "There was no structure …. It was so chaotic." Brown agrees. At PS 230, she found students in need of special services who hadn't been getting them, and teachers who were all over the map with their instruction. "People were teaching whatever they wanted to, they were using whatever materials, and they were setting their own schedules," says Brown. "And the team meetings were a nightmare. They were the most hateful, cliquish things I have sat in on in my life." A fight broke out among students in one classroom during state testing her first January at the school. Not surprisingly, the scores that year were dismal. Only 18 percent of fourth graders at PS 230 met or exceeded proficiency on the state's English language arts tests; in math at the same grade level, the proficiency rate was just under 12 percent. It was based on those results that the state designated PS 230 as a School Under Registration Review—or SURR school—meaning that it could be restructured if it failed to improve.

Brown brought to this challenge a mix of experience in non-profit leadership and in teaching that had shown her both the problems and possibilities in urban education. While majoring in English at Yale as an undergraduate, she worked for LEAP—short for Leadership, Education, and Athletics in Partnership—a youth group in New Haven. As a counselor, Brown spent her summers living in the neighborhoods of the children she worked with. After Yale, she trained to be a teacher at Harvard, where she earned a masters. She then returned to LEAP for a year to manage the organization before becoming an English language teacher at a New Haven district middle school. But the workplace felt toxic, with teachers often at odds with each other. After a year she left for Amistad Academy, the New Haven charter school whose success in closing achievement gaps has drawn it national attention, and whose model now is being replicated by the Achievement First network of charters. At Amistad, where she taught literacy for two years, she found a highly structured environment for students, and a staff that eagerly worked together to examine student work and plan for improvement.

Brown's residency in New Leaders further crystallized her vision of school effectiveness. She was assigned to the Family Academy in Harlem, which was founded as a small elementary school that aimed to give families a comprehensive array of health and social services, along with a well-thought-out curriculum and extended learning time for students. When Brown joined, it had recently expanded into a K-8 school by taking over a low-performing New York City district school. As a result, Brown was able to take part in the process of melding the two staffs and creating a coherent culture for the new, expanded school. While there, she coached teachers on instruction, led discussions on analyzing performance data, and oversaw an afterschool program that served about 400 students. Along with her time at Amistad, her residency convinced her that nothing was more important than developing the skills of those who work with students in the classroom. Says Brown: "As bad as the culture may be, and as low as the professional standards are, your work has to be to elevate those professional standards to develop the teachers to do what needs to be done."

At the time Brown came to PS 230, the New York City schools were beginning a massive transformation that would significantly shape her work. State lawmakers had just wrested control of the 1.1 million-student system from a locally elected school board and handed it to the then-newly elected mayor, Michael Bloomberg. Along with Joel Klein, the former anti-trust lawyer that Bloomberg picked to be chancellor of schools, Bloomberg oversaw a dramatic restructuring of the

country's largest school system. The city's long-standing, largely autonomous 32 community districts were recreated into 10 regions led by superintendents who reported directly to the chancellor. A new chancellor of instruction instituted common teaching methods across the entire system. One was balanced literacy, which stresses teaching students how to make their own meaning from text, while also covering word skills, like making plurals. Similarly, the system adopted a math approach that emphasized concepts and problem solving, not just computation. The literacy strategies in particular are challenging to master, and the changes sparked protest from those who favored more skills-based methods.

Collaborative Training and Planning

Given the level of chaos she found at PS 230, Brown spent much of her first weeks there making the simple point that old norms of behavior were no longer acceptable. She publicly escorted a number of belligerent parents out the building herself, and she made clear that school security personnel would respond to disruptions. With input from other principals—including other New Leaders—she drafted a handbook of basic professional expectations, like the willingness to work together to diagnose problems and experiment with new strategies. To show them what that looked like, she had all of her teachers visit the school led by a principal who'd been assigned as her mentor by the district. While there, they observed instruction, met with the school's teachers, and saw them collaborate in meetings. "My whole purpose was for them to hear other teachers who were no smarter than them, no more prepared and equipped to do the work, really thinking and talking at a high level," says Brown. The visits also helped her gauge her staff's willingness to change. "I could almost see on people's faces who immediately got on board with me, and who was like shutting down," she says.

Knowing that her teachers faced a steep learning curve, Brown laid out what she felt was a doable plan for implementing new curricula. She convinced her regional superintendent to let her delay for one year the adoption of the system's balanced literacy model for teaching reading, called Readers Workshop. Instead, the school would temporarily continue using a highly scripted teaching program, Success for All, that it had just begun to implement before Brown arrived. In the meantime, she would have them use the writing portion of the district's model, Writers Workshop, which incorporated most of the elements they would later use for teaching reading, like mini-lessons led by teachers followed by the application of skills by students in small group and individual work. Says Brown, "It was enough that you have a new principal, a new chancellor, a whole system reorganization, and now you're telling them to learn a whole new way of teaching." She would, however, follow the school system's implementation schedule for its new math program, Everyday Math, which meant using it that first year in grades K-2, and then adding more grades thereafter.

Even with what she hoped was a more manageable roll-out of the curricular programs, Brown recognized that her staff needed extra time during the week to learn new methods. Over the first summer before school started, she had met with all of her teachers to gauge their professional knowledge, and was shocked to discover veterans who'd never done running records, the technique used to quickly assess reading skills by tracking the number and types of mistakes students make while reading aloud. So along with weekly planning time for teachers during the day, she created after school and Saturday sessions that teachers could get paid for attending if they opted to. (Later, she would also offer training during teachers' lunch periods.) The training focused on the components of balanced literacy and the teaching skills involved, and Brown says that all teachers took part in one of the times. Brown paid for it by shifting money from other areas, including

afterschool programs for students. "The practice was so defective that to give the kids more time to do nothing wasn't as smart as giving the teachers time to work to develop the skills they needed in order to be more effective," she explains.

While the Saturday and after school training focused mostly on the 'how' of teaching, the weekly planning time that Brown created for each grade level during the day was devoted more toward developing the 'what.' The new literacy approaches in particular required teachers to design their own lessons incorporating a common set of general elements. To guide teachers on how to collaboratively draft such lessons, Brown contracted with a consultant from A.U.S.S.I.E., a New York-based professional development group founded by Australian experts in pedagogy. Initially, the principal arranged for teachers to get 45 minutes of common planning time each week. But in January of Brown's first year, the teachers asked for her to increase that to 90-minutes. "Once they saw what we had to get to, it changed the dynamic," says Brown, who responded that she would do whatever it took to rearrange the schedule again, midyear, to accommodate the request. "If you're going to come to me and say '90-minutes,' then my job is to make that happen, because you're doing exactly what I want you to."

Over time, PS 230 has significantly honed its use of professional development and teacher planning. After her first year, Brown instituted a requirement that teachers bring copies of the state's standards to their weekly grade-level meetings. Teachers got training in Understanding by Design, the framework for lesson planning that has educators begin with the knowledge or skill that students need to learn, and from that construct learning activities to ensure that they acquire it. Heather Dawe, who joined the school as its literacy coach after Brown's second year, says that it took teachers a long time to shift the focus of their thinking from teaching to student learning. She recalls how after she arrived she found that teachers had planned a four-week unit on letter writing, but without making a clear connection to a learning objective. "I had to explain to them that letter writing was not a unit, it was a product, and we weren't going to spend four weeks on the structure of a letter," she says. "The big thing for us was to get people to start with the end in mind, and not start with the learning activities."

To further refine instruction, Brown also established what she called a Staff Development Consultation Committee beginning her third year. Initially made up of teachers from each grade level—some strong, some of whom she wanted to develop—the group did monthly classroom observations to identify strengths and weaknesses to inform the planning of professional development. The next year, she recreated the group so that all of its members were strong teachers, so they could serve as models throughout the school. And rather than just have them focus on walkthroughs, they worked much of the time with an outside consultant on how to adopt new teaching techniques at the school. As such, the committee played a critical role in translating new methods for the rest of the staff. "The consultant does really good stuff, but sometimes it can be a little too heady," says Brown, "And so these teachers do a good job of saying, well, *this* would be more clear." And while members of the committee could take new approaches and model them for their grade levels, they also could report back to the school's leadership on implementation challenges. The Staff Development Consultation Committee was in addition to the Curriculum Team—made up of the school's two assistant principals and instructional coaches—which Brown formed early on in her tenure to lead schoolwide planning on teaching and learning.

As they learned how to collaborate, teachers at PS 230 produced a significant amount of curricular materials for the school. After revising the initial lesson units they had created to make

them more standards based, they went on to create curriculum calendars to guide the pace of their instruction throughout the year. In doing so for literacy instruction, they consulted pacing materials from the Reading and Writing Project at Columbia University. Working with an expert from Learner Centered Initiatives, a Sea Cliff, N.Y.-consulting group, teachers also drafted rubrics for assessing student writing. As a result, they were able to agree on what high quality writing should look like at each grade level. Dawe says the principal's strategy in having teachers develop such products together reflects a cornerstone of Brown's leadership style. "Drema had a clear vision around involving teachers, and acknowledging their expertise … instead of saying, 'here's the book, here's how we're going to do it,' " she says. "You can write the best curriculum in the world yourself and hand it to someone, but they're not going to be able to implement it."

To be sure, it took time for teachers to gain confidence in producing such materials. Wanda Acevedo, a special education teacher who joined PS 230 the same year as Brown, says that at first most teachers there didn't know how to plan collaboratively, and some didn't want to. To guide them, starting her second year at the school Brown and two other administrators each took one or two grade levels of teachers and led their meetings. "They would set the agenda, and then we would come prepared to speak to whatever the agenda was," she says. A couple years later, teachers didn't need such explicit direction. By then, they had become more partners in process, says Acevedo. "We we're working as colleagues, not as supervisors and workers," she says. "That's why we got so many things done, because we were working as a team." Teachers also learned to trust each other more. Acevedo says that when Brown began having teachers examine student work together, at first they blocked out the names of the students and their classes. But no more. Says Acevedo: "People have gone away from thinking, 'this is a personal attack on me,' to 'this is part of what we're doing to produce quality work.' " Brown's sensitivity to what teachers needed to make such major adjustments in how they worked was a big help, Acevedo adds. "She knows how to read people really well," the teacher explains. "Just sitting down and talking with you, she notes why you're frustrated."

Making these strategies possible meant major changes in the deployment of resources. Brown dedicated large amounts of funding to make classroom environments more conductive to learning, purchasing books for students to choose and materials for charts of instructional strategies. She secured $200,000 in grants to turn school's dilapidated library into a stunning centerpiece for the school, and she converted a dean's office into a training room for teachers. To give students more attention, she also instituted the practice of having all instructionally trained staff without their own classes, like the librarian, working in classrooms during literacy instruction. Recognizing that teachers represent her greatest resource, she assigned teachers to classes based on their strengths and weaknesses. "Going into that second year I took like a wrecking ball to the organization," she recalls. "I said 'you cannot teach fourth grade, let's put you here because we have a lot of work to do with you.' " Also her second year, she either removed or convinced into leaving 10 teachers she felt were not getting on board. Says the principal: "To their credit, some people—given the direction the school was going in—they made the decision to move on."

Of all the qualities that Brown looks for when hiring teachers, she says the most critical is that they be learners. Teachers who aren't interested in honing their craft wind up holding back both their own students and the rest of the staff, she explains. "They kill you on two fronts," Brown says. "If their classrooms are okay, they still could be better. And, they're also culture killers. If you're building this culture of professional learning, and they aren't learning, then they're toxic to that." The great extent to which Brown values reflective teachers is seen in the process she uses to recruit

them. All candidates are required to teach demonstration lessons at her school, after which she presses them on what they might have done differently. She also asks them to talk about a time when they failed at something, and what they learned from the experience. Those who offer superficial answers she avoids. "The hardest work is to find people who really match the school's culture," she says. She adds that she's had more success getting the right kinds of people through recommendations from other principals she respects than going to job fairs or relying on specific preparation programs.

Performance Monitoring

For collaboration and training to produce the desired results, Brown is adamant that schools must collect and analyze evidence of what's working, and what isn't. As a result, data have become increasingly interwoven into the work of students and teachers at PS 230. In October of her first year there, the principal held the first of what would become annual fall meetings with each of her teachers for the purpose of reviewing their students' performance results and setting goals for the year. She holds another round of meetings at midyear to assess teachers' progress against their objectives. In her second year, she instituted the requirement that all teachers regularly employ running records to gauge student's progress in literacy; in math, the requirement was to use a set of common weekly math problems. In Brown's fourth year, teachers got trained on entering and analyzing student performance information on literacy skills on handheld computers. Meanwhile, students have become used to seeing such formative data, as well. Posters that adorn the walls throughout the school indicate where individual students are in their "climbs" up "Mt. Readmore."

Brown tries to be an astute consumer of data tools. The meeting at which she joined her assistant principals and literacy coaches to review a new interim assessment series is a case in point. Until then, the school had been using another set of interim tests that the district had arranged for its schools to have access to that could be administered several times a year. School leaders had found that those weren't as aligned to state standards as they hoped. Another frustration, Brown said, was that the publisher didn't return results fast enough; as a result, the school wound up purchasing a scantron machine so that it could do its own scoring immediately after each administration. Brown's charge to the group at the meeting was to decide whether the new assessments—which the district was adopting to replace the previous ones—were up to the job, or if the school needed to create its own series. Should they have opted for the latter, she planned to tap a nonprofit group she knew of that gave assistance in custom-building schoolwide assessments. "So the question is, can we design better?" she told those at the table. Ultimately, they decided that the new, off-the-shelf tests would meet their needs.

On other occasions, the school has created its own monitoring tools. In Brown's third year, she assigned a team of teachers the task of designing a standard system of compiling student results for periodic review. Constructed with guidance from Learning Centered Consultants, the result was PS 230's portfolio system. Each portfolio contains an array of data and examples of student work, as well as a cover sheet offering an at-a-glance picture of performance. Students go through the contents with their teachers on regular "portfolios days." While the kinds of data in them are common across the school, students also get to pick some of the materials that go into their portfolios, like pieces of writing they feel best show their abilities; Dawe says part of the aim is for kids to feel ownership of their results. "The students are supposed to look in them, and know what's in them, and know what it says about them as learners," she says. Meanwhile, teachers are expected

to use what's in the portfolio as the basis for the grades they give. The portfolios also allow school leaders to get a quick snapshot of how classes are progressing.

Meanwhile, Brown has sought to keep tabs on practice as much as she has outcomes. She's been a regular in teachers' classrooms, which Dawe says was critical for improving instruction there. "Drema spent a lot of time in her observations and walkthroughs looking at how things were being implemented, and then she would say, 'so-and-so is doing this, and needs this,' " she says. "That doesn't happen in every school." Another pulse-taking technique she designed are annual surveys. First polling teachers and parents, and then students starting her fourth year, she's used the results to get a picture of how improvement efforts are playing out in the classroom. She's asked students their favorite and least favorite subjects (the answers, respectively, were math and writing.) When asked what they do when they need help on an assignment in the classroom, two-thirds said "ask the teacher," while about 44 percent said "use classroom charts." Brown felt this last result indicated a need for teachers to do more to help students become independent learners, one of her major instructional goals.

Addressing Students Social-Emotional Needs

Although the bulk of her focus has been on classroom instruction, Brown says that raising student achievement at PS 230 also demands careful attention to student's non-academic needs. The school's attendance rate has hovered around 90 percent, meaning that the average student has missed more than three weeks of school a year. Kids at PS 230 live in families struggling with all forms of abuse, and lack of parent involvement often frustrates the school's attempts to give the most challenged students extra services. Brown recalls the parent of a student with severe deficits in reading who refused at first to let him take part in an instructional intervention program after school, even when staff offered to walk him home at the end of it each day. Many students at PS 230 live without one parent, or any. As Acevedo explains, the effects of such dysfunctions are compounded by the fact that so many of the school's students live in the same apartment towers across the street. "It's like they bring their whole life to school," she says. "Whatever happens in the park or in their buildings as neighbors, they bring that to the school. … It's not enough to suspend them, because then you're not getting at the root of the problem."

Much as she has sought to establish new norms for staff behavior, Brown has overseen the creation of new standards for how students conduct themselves. Adapting a strategy from Amistad Academy, she decided to institute a schoolwide curriculum for student behavior around the values of respect, enthusiasm, achievement, caring, and hard work. But while taking the idea from her old school, she had staff members at PS 230 draft their own version of the curriculum—again reflecting her view that strategies work best when the people using them have a hand in their creation. Staff members drew up descriptions of different ways in which students might demonstrate each of the REACH values, as well tools for evaluating students against the standards. At monthly assemblies, the school now honors students for exhibiting behavior consistent with the expectations. The events also feature skits demonstrating positive behavior. Brown has used her surveys of students to gauge how the curriculum is being received. On it, she's asked them to list each of the REACH values, and indicate which they demonstrate the most, and which they show the least.

Brown also tapped a local nonprofit, Turnaround for Children, which helps schools form teams to build a series of social safety nets. PS 230 created three such teams of staff members: A "Core Team" charged with creating schoolwide strategies to promote a positive culture; An

"Instructional Support Team" responsible for early identification of students needing extra help; And a "Student Intervention Team," which assists those with severe needs, often by connecting families with external services. (Brown mentions how they helped a youngster who needed medication for behavior but hadn't been taking it regularly.) The teams include administrators, the school's psychologist, guidance counselor, and parent coordinator, among others. "It makes you less reactive in dealing with issues, because you have all the right people in place," says Brown, who learned of Turnaround for Children through the intermediate school in the same building. Schools working with the group provide a social worker to coordinate the efforts, but they also get the added assistance of three full-time interns from Columbia University's school of social work.

Looking Ahead

PS 230 has come a long way since Brown arrived in 2003, in terms of performance and morale. The principal recalls the anxiety of staff when, halfway through her second year, the school learned it had been put on the state's list of sites for possible intervention based on its previous year's scores. "It was one of those moments where, as a leader, it was like, 'this is a sinking ship,' " she says. "But I had to say, 'we've got a plan, this plan is based on what we know works, what experts say works, and so we're going to stay true to that plan." Sure enough, the scores for her second year went up significantly. In English language arts, the percent of fourth graders meeting state proficiency jumped from 11.7 to 35.3; in math at the same grade, they skyrocketed from 18.3 to 57.1.[16] In the two years since then, the math proficiency rate for fourth graders at PS 230 continued to climb, to 64.1 percent in 2007; The corresponding rate for English language arts rose from 35.3 to 49.4 in Brown's third year, but then fell back down to 34.5 percent her fourth. Brown attributes the dip to a three-fold hike in the number of non-native English speakers tested that year—the result of a change in policy on when such students must first be administered state tests.

Brown believes the school's striking success in math points to how literacy instruction at PS 230 ought to be modified to achieve further gains. Every Day Math, the program the school adopted by district directive when Brown arrived, is highly structured and involves lots of hands-on activities, and even games. In contrast, the balanced literacy approach that the school has used is less explicit, and more conceptual—both for teachers and students. Brown doesn't think the school should abandon the way it's been teaching reading and writing, but she does feel it needs to be supplemented with lessons that give much clearer guidance to students, particularly English language learners. "While still using the balanced literacy approach, we have to do a better job of balancing the skills and the strategies," says Brown. As a result, the school plans to devote a good deal of planning time in the 2007-08 school year to developing such lessons. It also plans to bring greater structure to instruction in science and social studies, which hasn't been a major focus for the school. Brown is hopeful the school will be able to pursue its own instructional strategies. In 2006, it joined New York City's Empowerment Zone, a group of schools given increased autonomy—and some additional funding—in exchange for new accountability. "It means we didn't have to worry if our plans didn't fit the district priorities," she says.

The biggest test for PS 230 will be whether it can continue to improve with new leadership. After four years as its principal, Brown left the school in summer 2007 to join the staff of New Leaders for New Schools, where she is coaching residents in New York City. One of those

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[16] Grade level proficiency rates discussed here may not match results in the chart on page one of this case, as the data in the chart represent aggregate numbers, not just one grade.

residents is Heather Dawe, who left her job as literacy coach at PS 230 to go through the New Leaders training program. Fortunately, their shoes are being filled by others who were key to the improvement. Penn-Jackson, the assistant principal, is taking Brown's place. Hackshaw Smith, the math coach, is now an assistant principal, and Acevedo, the special education teacher, has become the new literacy coach. As important as the people in those roles, however, Brown says the practices put in place under her watch—around collaboration, progress monitoring, and addressing the needs of the whole child—are now the defining features of the school's culture. Says Brown: "As a leader, you want to know that when you leave that there was something left that wasn't there before you got there, and that the work keeps going on whether you're there or not." Penn-Jackson says Brown accomplished just that. Says the PS 230's new principal: "There are so many things that are all right and that I don't have to worry about, and I'm just building on them."

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION FROM THE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND CHANGE LITERATURE
SUMMARY REVIEWS OF KEY RESEARCH PREPARED FOR
THE CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS'S EVENT ON NEW LEADERS FOR NEW SCHOOLS

INTRODUCTION

The literature on leadership and school performance dates back to early "effective schools" research (Edmonds, 1979) that documented high poverty schools performing better than expected. Since these early studies, which noted that "strong leaders" existed in effective schools, the field has developed an increasingly detailed understanding of the relationship between principals and achievement. Much of the recent literature in this tradition is beginning to share commonalities with a newer branch of work on turnaround schools and turnaround leadership, work that focuses specifically on making drastic yet sustainable change in chronically underperforming contexts. All these research strands offer insights into the changes adults need to embrace in order to realize the transformations we need in education. This document captures major insights from these interrelated research areas, providing summaries of key research in four areas:

Part 1: Literature on leadership and school performance: This section provides a long synopsis of an important and comprehensive literature review on principals and achievement. Other elements in this section include a summary of a key meta-analysis of the literature and a brief summary of a new framework for assessing principals that is based on the literature.

Part 2: Literature on "turnaround" schools: A range of case studies has documented qualities of schools that serve high proportions of low income and minority children and succeed in promoting high achievement. This section provides brief summaries of major findings from this work.

Part 3: Literature on turnaround leadership: Little is known about how leading a school through a turnaround phase might differ from leading a school through incremental improvement. This section covers a new body of work from the Center on Innovation and Improvement that explores turnaround leadership.

Part 4: Literature on promoting learning that can lead to deep change in schools: Because school change is dependent on the adults in the building embracing changes in their own practices and beliefs, this section summarizes select literature on creating a culture for learning and supporting adult learning shifts.

SHARED THEMES FROM ACROSS THIS RESEARCH

Leadership matters. The impact of leadership on achievement is second only to the classroom teacher among in-school factors. Classroom factors explain a third of student achievement variation, and school leadership explains a quarter. Cultivating and supporting good leaders is a necessary ingredient for our educational reform goals.

Strong leaders communicate strong, idealistic visions; promote a healthy culture and community; take risks; promote school-wide focus and coherence; create a climate of intellectual stimulation; exhibit strong leadership focused on instruction; manage change and monitor results; and effectively direct school processes. The local setting must inform how they accomplish this work.

Leadership is even more important in weak schools. The principal is a central actor in school change. In challenged schools, principals have an even larger effect on outcomes compared to their counterparts in higher-functioning schools. Schools with significant obstacles to improvement have been unable to turn around without a strong leader present to guide the difficult work of changing the school's culture.

Leaders influence achievement indirectly by creating a viable organization. The strongest correlations between principals and achievement come through factors such as ensuring an environment full of intellectual stimulation, being aware of the details of the school's operations, and challenging the status quo.

Turnaround leadership differs from traditional leadership models. Cross-sector analysis of literature about successful turnarounds identifies a focused set of shared qualities that work in tandem when leaders are seeking to make dramatic changes in their organizations. Turnarounds pursue limited but intense reforms in the first few months, require autonomy to make changes, realign resources to meet goals, and engage in regular performance monitoring. Leaders in these contexts have strong visions for the future, involve leadership teams in the work, challenge the status quo, and drive change.

Succeeding in education reform requires changes in adults' belief systems. Although strong leaders are necessary for school reform, ultimately, other adults, particularly teachers, must examine—and change—their own beliefs and practices. Using accountability as a motivator can actually run counter to creating the kind of learning-centered environment that supports teachers' own deep learning.

The intent of this document is to provide an accessible, high-level overview of some key research in these areas. We chose to use a summary approach so that readers might be able to learn from this valuable research and identify sources that are particularly fitting to their needs. Since the document is intended for internal learning, not as a formal research review, we have minimized the use of quotation marks and internal citations; instead, we have provided page references from the original sources for concepts we have summarized. As a result, readers wishing to cite ideas summarized here are encouraged to consult the primary sources rather than quoting directly from this document.

Because this document is intended as a synopsis for learning purposes, we have minimized the use of quotations marks to facilitate reading. Those wishing to cite information from these pieces should consult the associated pages of the original research for quotations or summaries

48

Leithwood, K., Louis, K. S., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). *How leadership influences student learning*: **The Wallace Foundation.**
(This comprehensive literature review funded by the Wallace Foundation is available online and offers a useful executive summary.)

In their synthetic literature review across qualitative case studies and quantitative analyses of leaders' impact, Leithwood and colleagues found "3 Basics of Successful Leadership" (pp. 8-9, 23-25):

1. Setting direction. Leaders need to understand that "people are motivated by goals which they find personally compelling, as well as challenging but achievable." People make sense of their work and identity with it when they see the work aligned with personally meaningful goals. Leadership tasks related to setting direction include:
- Identifying and articulating a vision
- Fostering acceptance of group goals
- Creating high performance expectations
- Monitoring organizational performance
- Promoting effective communication throughout the organization

2. Developing people. Substantial evidence indicates that leaders can positively influence individuals' motivation and capacity (necessary elements of school performance) by:
- Offering intellectual stimulation
- Providing individualized support
- Providing appropriate models of best practices and beliefs considered fundamental to the organization

Doing this effectively depends both on leaders' knowledge of the technical core of teaching and learning *and* on their interpersonal skills (such as the capacity to provide personal attention and to work from people's strengths). Individuals' motivations to engage the direction a leader or organization sets are strongly "influenced by their direct experiences with their leaders as well as the organizational context in which they work."

3. Redesigning the organization. Good leaders strengthen school culture, improve organizational structures, and build collaborative processes and incentives that support rather than inhibit strong teaching and learning. They also ensure that the organization is flexible enough to change with school needs. Because organizational conditions can "wear down" educators' good intentions to meet the organization's goals, leaders should ensure the organizational contexts are not at odds with the goals. (For example, high-stakes testing approached only through drill and practice can go against teachers wanting to see students develop holistically; or personal incentives for pay "can erode teachers' intrinsic commitments to the welfare of their students.")

Beyond these basics, the research highlights a range of contextual factors effective leaders must understand (pp. 10-12, 51-57):

Organizational context. Geography, school size, school level, school history—these and many other contextual factors influence what decisions and actions are best for leaders to take. Thus, leaders need a large repertoire of practices to draw on, not a standard set of practices to follow.

Student population. Leaders must attend to what works best for their students. For example, economically disadvantaged students learn best "…in small schools and classes …in untracked, heterogeneous groups …using active forms of learning…with rich, meaningful curricular content." A challenge for principals is that little is known about how leaders can, for heterogeneous groupings, "generate high expectations, foster a faster pace of instruction, encourage sharing of effective learning among peers and adopt a more challenging curriculum."

Policy context. Successful leaders adapt to address current policy orientations by, for example, becoming more "competitive" in a choice-oriented system; eliciting a broader range of voices as a result of differing stakeholder orientations; targeting instructional guidance to align with the system; or mastering strategic planning to optimize school improvement cycle demands.

Leadership in diverse settings. Leaders must build on students' strengths, not emphasize deficits; heighten awareness across the school community about social injustice; provide capacities to community not to promulgate inequity; and engage in political action to reduce inequity. Leaders should integrate two distinct approaches to leadership in this regard:
- Using policies and initiatives that, from best evidence, serve the children in the building
- Ensuring at a minimum that these policies and initiatives are equitably implemented

Leaders can do many things to improve their schools, but some levers are stronger than others. The following key areas are high-impact levers that can help schools reach their goals (p.13):

Teaching and learning
- Ensuring teachers have strong pedagogic content knowledge
- Promoting teachers' professional learning community
- Optimizing classroom contexts, including size, groupings, curricular richness, and monitoring of progress

School level
- Promoting a clear mission and goals
- Developing a strong culture
- Including teachers in decision making
- Fostering relationships with parents and wider community

District level
- Developing a strong culture
- Providing professional development for teachers aligned to priorities
- Creating policies governing leadership succession

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50

Marzano, R. J., Waters, T., & McNulty, B. (2005). *School leadership that works: From research to results.* **Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.**

(A meta-analysis of high-quality quantitative studies of effective leadership.)

Marzano and colleagues identify 21 principal "responsibilities" (below) that go beyond "characteristics" because actions can be associated with the responsibilities. These responsibilities cluster in groups that are critical for general school improvement and for "second-order" change—those deep changes in school culture and practice necessary to create transformative change. In the summary chart below, items marked with a * relate strongly to a school's sense of collective efficacy—which has been found to be a stronger predictor of student achievement than socioeconomic status. Items marked with a + relate strongly to principals' ability to drive "second-order" or deep change.

Principal Responsibilities Correlated with Student Achievement
(from Marzano et al., 2005, pp. 42-43, 70, 100-101)

* Affirmation: Recognizes and celebrates accomplishments and acknowledges failures	**Involvement in Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment:** Is directly involved in design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices
+ Change Agent: Is willing to challenge and actively challenges the status quo	**+ Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment:** Is knowledgeable about current curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices
Contingent Rewards: Recognizes and rewards individual accomplishments	**+ Monitoring/Evaluating:** Monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning
* Communication: Establishes strong lines of communication with and among teachers and students	***+ Optimizer:** Inspires and leads new and challenging innovations
* Culture: Fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation	**Order:** Establishes a set of standard operating procedures and routines
Discipline: Protects teachers from issues and influences that would detract from teaching time/focus	**Outreach:** Is an advocate and spokesperson for the school to all stakeholders
+ Flexibility: Adapts leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and is comfortable with dissent	*** Relationships:** Demonstrates an awareness of the personal aspects of teachers and staff
Focus: Establishes clear goals and keeps those goals in the forefront of the school's attention	**Resources:** Provides teachers with materials and professional development necessary for successful execution of their jobs
+ Intellectual Stimulation: Ensures faculty and staff are aware of current theories and practices; makes their discussion a regular aspect of the school's culture	*** Situational Awareness:** Is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school and uses this information to address current and potential problems
* Input: Involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies	*** Visibility:** Has quality contact and interactions with teachers and students
*+ Ideals / Beliefs: Communicates and operates from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling	

Goldring, E., Porter, A. C., Murphy, J., Elliot, S. N., & Cravens, X. (2007). Assessing Learning-centered leadership: Connections to research, professional standards, and current practices. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University.
(A Wallace-funded project to develop a principal assessment model)

Vanderbilt is developing a principal assessment model that focuses on the core components for leadership and the processes that are associated with those components. The model sees leaders' knowledge and skills, personal characteristics, and values and beliefs as precursors to leadership behaviors. Leaders' behaviors lead to school performance on core competencies such as providing a rigorous curriculum and high-quality instruction. School performances then lead to student success. Their approach privileges instructional leadership based on value-added literature on student achievement. They have developed a matrix approach to assess principals on the actions that intersect the **_core components_** of a strong school and **_key processes_**.

Core components (pp. 5-10)
- **High standards for student learning:** Absolute high standards exist for all students and include associated clear, measurable, rigorous goals.
- **Rigorous curriculum:** Academic content is ambitious for all students in all core subjects.
- **Quality instruction:** Effective instructional/pedagogic practices maximize student academic and social learning.
- **Culture of learning and professional behavior:** Integrated communities of professional practice serve student academic and social learning.
- **Connections to external communities:** Family and/or other people and institutions in the community help advance social and academic learning.
- **Systemic performance accountability:** Individual and collective responsibility among leadership, faculty, and students are key for achieving rigorous academic and social learning goals.

Key processes (pp. 10-14)
- **Planning:** Leaders articulate shared direction and coherent policies, practices, and procedures for realizing high standards of student performance. There is a strategic orientation in planning.
- **Implementing:** Leaders implement; they put into practice the activities necessary to realize high standards, including programs, PD, and learning about and sharing curriculum improvements.
- **Supporting:** Leaders create enabling conditions; they secure and use the financial, political, technological, and human resources necessary to promote academic and social learning. There should be a strong focus on transformational skills and practices, as well as human capital management.
- **Advocating:** Leaders promote students' diverse needs within and beyond the school. This includes such a range of interests as diversity, special needs resources, rigorous curriculum for all, and family and community policies and supports.
- **Communicating:** Leaders develop, utilize, and maintain systems of exchange among members of the school and with its external communities. This includes communication around high goals, progress toward goals, and developing professional communities within schools through reflective dialogue.

- **Monitoring:** Leaders systematically collect and analyze data to make judgments that guide decisions and actions for continuous improvement. This includes curriculum, students' program of study, quality of instruction, and effectiveness of PD.

PART 2: TURNAROUND SCHOOLS

Calkins, A., Guenther, W., Belfiore, G., & Lash, D. (2007). The turnaround challenge. Retrieved Dec., 2007, from http://www.massinsight.org/micontent/trnresources.aspx

Mass Insight's *Turnaround Challenge* has a focus on systemic change, but also offers findings from turnaround schools. They exhibit dramatically different thinking patterns—shifting from a "conveyor belt" concept that moves students in a linear fashion from adult to adult, grade to grade, to a new model where adults rally as teams around students, particularly students in need. Their model focuses on three "readiness" areas, each with three associated elements. When the readiness areas are aligned, the rallying of adults can work to transform learning. (pp. 8-11)

Readiness to Learn
- Safety, Discipline, & Engagement: Students feel secure and inspired to learn.
- Action Against Adversity: Schools directly address their students' poverty-driven deficits.
- Close Student-Adult Relationships: Students have positive and enduring mentor/teacher relationships.

Readiness to Teach
- Shared Responsibility for Achievement: Staff feel deep accountability and a missionary zeal for student achievement.
- Personalization of Instruction: Teaching is individualized based on diagnostic assessment and adjustable time on task.
- Professional Teaching Culture: There is continuous improvement through collaboration and job-embedded learning.

Readiness to Act
- Resource Authority: School leaders can make mission-driven decisions regarding people, time, money, and program.
- Resource Ingenuity: Leaders are adept at securing additional resources and leveraging partner relationships.
- Agility in the Face of Turbulence: Leaders, teachers, and systems are flexible and inventive in responding to constant unrest.

Supplementary case studies from the Mass Insight report highlight the following qualities of turnaround schools:
- Increased instructional time in core areas
- Quick and intensive support for struggling students
- Instructional strategy choices appropriate to the students being served and the school's mission. What those strategies are (e.g., field-based learning or computer assisted instruction) may matter less than the match between the strategy and the needs of the student population.

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53

Carter, S. C. (2000). *No excuses: Lessons from 21 high-performing, high-poverty schools.* Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation.

The Heritage Foundation's analysis of 21 "No Excuses" schools identified 7 common traits:
- Principal autonomy
- Measurable goals to establish culture of achievement—with focus on basic skills
- High-quality teachers
- Rigorous and regular testing
- Using rigorous demands for achievement as the key to discipline (through self-control, self-esteem, order, etc.)
- Parental contact to support learning efforts, with children having accountability for learning
- Effort as key to success

Reeves, D. B. (2003). High performance in high poverty schools: 90/90/90 and Beyond.

Doug Reeves' (2003) original 90/90/90 schools (90% or more free/reduced lunch, 90% or more ethnic/minority students, and 90% of students performing at standards in at least one subject) documented what high-performing, high-poverty schools in Milwaukee had in common. He emphasized that what differentiates these schools are the teaching and leadership practices; student demographics are not the determining factor. Schools in the original study all shared several qualities (pp. 3-8):
- **A focus on academic achievement:** Schools were "laser-like" in focus on achievement, with evidence everywhere that achievement was the focus of the school. Improvements toward goals, not just absolute levels, were celebrated.
- **Clear curriculum choices:** These schools focused on reading, writing, and math, de-emphasizing other areas of instruction and adding time to these core subjects. Nevertheless, science scores also improved.
- **Frequent assessment of student progress and multiple opportunities for improvement:** Students were assessed often, even weekly. Assessments were oriented toward what could be better next week—very formative and oriented toward improvement, not summative and oriented toward a grade.
- **An emphasis on nonfiction writing:** Frequent assessment using oral assessments did not translate to 90/90/90 status. Performance assessments in the best schools required developed written responses to tasks. Students were said to learn from the assessments themselves—"writing to think"—and teachers could use the assessments to better understand why students were not yet performing.
- **Collaborative scoring of student work:** Teachers exchanged papers with other teachers for scoring, and schools shared common scoring practices, standards, and benchmarks.

Replicable practices from other 90/90/90 schools that had achieved dramatic gains (turnaround schools) also included (pp. 9-13):
- Feedback to students in real-time, not at end of term, especially for those students needing extra supports
- Teacher learning focused on action research that assessed the impact of their work and replicated strong practices
- Principals assigning teachers to the grades and content areas that they had the most skill and preparation to teach

- Adults in the school participating in data analysis to understand how cohorts of students were progressing
- Every adult, from bus drivers to the PTA, as important "teachers" and holders of the standards of the school, reinforcing the overall goals and behavioral norms
- Cross-disciplinary integration engaging other subject area teachers to help develop and reinforce skills in natural, challenging, and holistic ways (e.g., if math ratio and measurement scores are low, art and PE teachers can explicitly draw out those principles in their curricula)

Chenoweth, K. (2007). *It's being done: Academic success in unexpected schools.* Cambridge: Harvard Education Press.

Chenoweth notes that adults in high-performing, high-poverty (HPHP) schools "expect students to learn, and they work hard to master skills and knowledge necessary to teach those students." Her findings include a long list of items found in much of the literature (pp. 216-226):

- Don't teach to the state tests
- Have high expectations for students
- Know the stakes if students don't succeed
- Embrace and use data
- Use data to focus on individual students
- Constantly re-examine what they do
- Embrace accountability
- Make decisions based on what is good for students, not adults
- Use school time wisely
- Leverage all community resources
- Expand time students have in school, especially struggling students
- Focus on developing positive behavior, not punitive punishment
- Establish an atmosphere of respect
- Like students
- Make sure students who struggle have the strongest instructors
- Have principals who are constantly present
- Have many leaders in the school
- Pay attention to the quality of the teaching staff
- Provide teachers with time to plan and work collaboratively
- Provide teachers time to observe each other
- Think seriously about professional development
- Carefully acculturate new teachers
- Have high-quality office and building staff who are part of the "team"
- Maintain nice places to work

Duke, D., Tucker, P. D., Belcher, M., Crews, D., Harrison-Coleman, J., Higgins, J., et al. (2005). *Lift-Off: Launching the school turnaround process in 10 Virginia schools*: Darden/Curry Partnership for Leaders in Education.

These case studies of the initial year of turnaround efforts highlight four primary challenges: low reading scores, low math scores, discipline problems, and low attendance. Their summary analysis across the 10 schools notes promoting teamwork, using data, and regular assessment and intervention as primary strategies for turnaround change. Though not noted explicitly in the document's analysis, an express alignment of instruction with tests also seemed prevalent across the sites. This documentation of the Virginia effort was too early to report on evidence of long-term or dramatic turnaround results.

Public Impact. (2007). School turnarounds: A review of the cross-sector evidence on dramatic organizational improvement. Lincoln, IL: Center on Innovation and Improvement.

The Center on Innovation and Improvement recently produced a framework for understanding school turnaround leadership by drawing lessons from turnarounds across a range of sectors— public and private. Their report, based on 59 sources from business, education, government, non-profit, and multi-sector research, documents that "efforts to turn around organizations that are failing on multiple metrics require more dramatic change to become successful" (p.4). All their sources shared themes under two broad categories: environmental context and leadership.

Environmental context (pp. 7-13). Several environmental factors appear to influence the success of a turnaround effort:

- **Timetable**: Planning should be appropriate to the approach, with more drastic changes such as total staff change requiring more preparation time for the leader and the site. In general, the most crucial time window occurs during initial implementation. Turnaround leaders implement intense, focused reforms during the first months. Focusing on a few high-impact activities and seeing them through is crucial to success; incomplete implementation is a leading indicator of failure. Once initial changes have taken hold, longer-term changes that will sustain the change momentum must be implemented.
- **Freedom to Act**: Because of the large changes needed in chronically failing sites, turnaround leaders need the freedom to act on their plans. When districts provide that freedom, they are documented to succeed more readily; however, many successful turnarounds have managed to work around the constraints of their systems. Among the most important elements for leaders to control are the authority to hire and fire personnel and the ability to alter working conditions.
- **Support and Aligned Systems**: When districts or governing boards are supportive of the turnaround efforts and goals, leaders are more successful in their efforts. Also, some evidence suggests that additional finances can be helpful for turnaround, but many other examples of successful turnarounds have effectively realigned existing human and fiscal resources in ways that reflect the organization's new priorities. Finally, in most sectors, external pressures of profits or fundraising create an added support for leaders seeking to turn around an organization because everyone sees that pressure as important. In education, however, external accountability measures have not functioned in the same way and are insufficient to create a shared sense of urgency for change.
- **Community Engagement**: Low "customer" trust is a common feature of failed turnarounds. Because dramatic changes create unsettling environments and strong emotions, leaders must reach out to communities, "making it clear why change is necessary and allowing staff and community members to see the real consequences of failure" (p.12). Creating meaningful ways for the community to participate in the change efforts helps ensure success.

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56

Leadership (pp. 13-24). The turnaround literature offers insights into leadership actions and leadership characteristics that make a difference in turnaround, with characteristics being the less researched of the two areas.

Successful Turnaround Leader Actions
- Focus on achieving a few wins in year 1. They identify the changes that will provide the largest impact and focus their efforts on those changes.
- Even though some desired changes may conflict with current norms, implement what has to be done. For example, if district contexts work against schedule changes, turnaround leaders find ways to make their needed changes happen anyway.
- Ensure a rich source of data on their key work and take personal responsibility for knowing what the data say as part of their analysis and problem-solving cycle. Make action plans based on data. Measure and report on data frequently and publicly.
- Make it clear that change is not optional, and everyone will be changing. Coupled with this action is the reality that some staff will need to be replaced, but turnaround leaders rarely replace more than a limited number of staff, as large-scale staff replacement results in longer-term instability.
- Funnel time and money into high-priority areas and stop unsuccessful efforts.
- Acknowledge progress, but keep focused on the goal, not letting small success take the place of the overall transformation needed.
- Communicate a positive, compelling vision of the future, including future results
- Help staff understand the problems from the "customer's" perspective (for example, like a New York leader did by requiring transit police to ride the daily train)
- Garner key support for the change, and silence naysayers early but indirectly by demonstrating success.

Successful Turnaround Leader Capabilities reflect a combination of start-up and middle-management capacities. Strong leaders in these sectors exhibit a range of traits that turnaround leaders must balance:

- Drive for results
- Problem solving
- Confidence
- Influence over others
- Teamwork
- Cooperation
- Analytic thinking

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57

Barkley, S., Bottoms, G., Feagin, C. H., & Clark, S. (2001). *Leadership matters: Building leadership capacity*. New York: The Wallace Foundation.

In a culture that often believes that intelligence is innate, it is paramount for leaders to help their school communities "unlearn" that concept. Promoting the concept of effort is an intuitive and practical approach to helping change underlying belief systems that run counter to learning. This Southern Regional Education Board report notes that since, in fact, student success is largely about effort, leaders must be able to create a "culture of effort." Barkley and colleagues identify five guiding principles that school leaders should follow as they drive this cultural shift:

- Use every moment to educate that effort is important
- Highlight progress and potential
- Provide teachers with support and follow-up in the classroom to ensure their success
- Bring community resources to bear on counseling needs
- Use data to have everyone confront the results of their efforts to get students to exert effort.

The report identifies three strategies leaders can use to change beliefs and actions about effort (pp. 5-8):

Model learning so that learning—and the effort to learn—becomes the norm.

- Principals and teachers actively share what they are reading and learning in order to get better on the job.
- Leaders attend all professional development that teachers attend.
- Leaders do what teachers are required to do for professional development generally, for example, submitting and sharing professional growth plans to teachers just as teachers do to them.

Provide compelling reasons for others to learn; in particular, tap into motivators for students to learn by ensuring they have challenging, interesting classes.

- Key human motivators include the desires to survive, belong, gain power, and have freedom and fun. Low-level classes do not tap into any of these motivators. They are not hard to survive in, and to belong, one should *not* excel. There is no power or freedom that will result from low-level classes, and they are more likely to be experienced as boring than fun. On the other hand, high expectations tap into these motivators. High-level classes that provide intellectual stimulation ignite a sense of freedom of thinking; they can be fun for teachers and students. The result of high-level learning is future power for students and current power for teachers. Surviving and belonging in such a desirable environment takes effort.

Create a coaching environment for continuous growth, moving away from judging and evaluating.

- In other professions, coaches are tasked to find the way for each individual to do his or her best; the coach is then judged on the outcomes. For principals, coaching rather than evaluation should predominate, and positive/encouraging feedback has been shown to improve instructional implementation practices.

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58

Fullan, M. (2005). Turnaround Leadership. *The Educational Forum, 69,* **174-181.**

Moving accountability to the background and capacity building to the foreground. Michael Fullan explores an unresolved question about research on improving schools: whether the work being done to improve achievement is always leading to the kind of school transformation that 1) is sustainable, and 2) would reflect broad educational goals. There is evidence that high-stakes testing has mixed results. For example, in Chicago, high school test scores have improved, but the numbers of students leaving school has increased. There are also growing numbers of case studies of schools that have transformed themselves—and these studies come from all ends of the political spectrum. Yet there is also clear evidence that high-stakes testing has in some cases driven out quality teachers and created incentives for "gaming" the test system.

Thus, the question education faces is how to ensure that the models we select to transform schools avoid the potential negative unintended consequences of high-stakes testing. Based on research from Canada, the UK, and the USA, Fullan suggests that school and district leaders should shift the weight of emphasis between the levers of accountability and capacity building. He finds that when accountability is the primary lever, positive changes happen in *some* contexts, but in other contexts negative consequences result. However, when accountability remains a real lever but is in the background, and capacity building is the main focus of school improvement, educators become more engaged and fulfilled, and schools can move beyond surface improvements (which often only move schools from "abysmal to adequate") and can focus on the deep changes needed to be true turnaround schools.

Sparks, D., Kegan, R., & Lahey, L. (2002). Inner conflicts, inner strengths. Journal of Staff Development(Summer), 66-71.

Helping People Change their Belief Systems. Many educators profess to hold beliefs that are aligned with goals of high achievement for all children, but their actions do not always align with those beliefs. Almost all the literature either expressly or through implication requires principals to help adults change the belief systems behind their actions in order to effect deep change—or "second-order" change, or "turnaround change." Kegan and Lahey, in their seminal work based on years of work with educators, have a process for guiding people through an exploration of the deep reasons behind the things they do that prevent them from reaching their true goals. They believe the most powerful driver of behavioral change is changing the way we view the world—which requires changing ourselves, including and especially leaders. They also draw a parallel between this work and Heifitz's distinction between technical learning and transformational learning, noting that leaders often try to address transformational learning needs with technical informational approaches, an approach destined to fail.

Kegan and Lahey say we have an "immune system" that manufactures non-change, despite deep commitments to improving teaching and learning. They examine people's complaints, actions, competing commitments, and assumptions as a way to get us to rethink the complexities within us that might work against the changes we say we want. They document that many of the "barriers" to our commitments are not a result of something external but are a result of conflicts in our internal commitments. If leaders can master the process of self-change and guide others through these barriers, efforts to create the deep changes in belief and practice needed to transform schools can succeed.

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