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Editors
Becky Cooke, Jim Howard, and Gene Sementi

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Jim Howard, Washington State University Spokane, PO Box 1495 Spokane, WA
99210-1495 • Telephone: (509) 358-7948; Fax: (509) 359-7933, E-mail: jameesh@wsu.edu.
The editorial committee seeks articles that provide perspectives, research and practical
information about the issues of and ways to improve learning and teaching in Washington State.
A message from the editors

This edition of Curriculum in Context marks several significant events. The first event is the change of editors of Curriculum in Context from the outstanding work of Dr. Joan Kingrey, Washington State University, who served as editor from 2006 to 2009. During Dr. Kingrey’s tenure as editor, WSASCD’s Curriculum in Context continued its tradition of excellence by providing timely and thoughtful discussions of topics and issues confronting educators and remaining the “practitioner’s best friend”. Although the editorship will remain with Washington State University, Becky Cooke, Jim Howard and Gene Sementi have enthusiastically agreed to assume the duties of editors for the journal.

Becky Cooke is currently the principal of Prairie View Elementary in the Mead School district and serves as an elected Board of Directors member for ASCD International. Her former experiences include elementary principal and middle school assistant principal in the Mead School District and acting and associate principal in the Bainbridge Island School District. Becky served as President of WSASCD from 2001 - 2002. Her knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and political influence coupled with her tireless work with ASCD provide genuine insights to local, national, and international efforts to improve education for all learners.

Jim Howard is currently a member of the educational leadership faculty at Washington State University and serves as coordinator of the principal certification program on the Spokane campus. Prior to joining WSU, Jim served as superintendent of the Davenport School District, middle school principal in the Walla Walla School District, assistant superintendent in the Central Kitsap School District, and principal and teacher at several schools in the West Valley School District. Jim’s breadth of experiences in P-12 and higher education along with his involvement in WSASCD, WASA and AWSP provide a well rounded understanding of the necessary connectivity of the total educational system.

Gene Sementi is currently the assistant superintendent in the West Valley School District and serves as adjunct faculty with several universities in the Spokane region. He has served in elementary, middle school and high school principal positions in the West Valley School District as well as teaching science and math in both West Valley and Saint Maries School District in Idaho. In 2004, Gene was selected as Washington State’s Middle Level Principal of the Year. His knowledge of curriculum, instruction, assessment and leadership combined with his active involvement in WERA, WSASCD and passion for educational effectiveness contribute to a well rounded educational background.

Although humbled by the extraordinary individuals who have served as editors before us, we are honored to assume the role of co-editors of Curriculum in Context and are committed to maintain the tradition of excellence that this journal has provided for over three decades to the educators of Washington state. As editors, along with regular features and selected highlights from the annual conference, we decide to select Curriculum in Context articles from Joan Kingrey’s tenure as editor that also related to WSASCD annual conference theme of “Beyond Success: Striving for Significance”. This became a daunting task with over sixty excellent articles from which to choose. As Washington State ASCD is one of the few educational associations that represents all of the stakeholders involved in educating children, so do our articles represent such diversity. We have selected authors from both sides of Washington State, from K - 12 as well as higher education, and who have a wide range of perspectives - from university faculty to high school student. Although this is just a representative sample of the exceptional articles in our journal, we hope that you will make time to read all of the voices involved in the dialogue about student learning across our great state:

Leadership still matters in guiding high schools – Lenoar Foster (Fall/Winter 2006) Leadership in the contemporary American high school is inextricably connected to the issues and challenges of school and curricular reform.

Re-culturing schools to become professional learning communities: A focus on learning – Robert Eaker and Janel Keating (Fall/Winter 2007) Significant cultural shifts occur when schools move from traditional practices to functional as PLCs.

A student’s voice – Shane Campbell (Spring/Summer 2008) This student gives us a snapshot of his experiences as a student who is African American in a majority white school setting.

…and college for all? – Paul Pitre (Spring/Summer 2008) An insightful discussion of Washington’s work to implement a P-16 policy that enhances the transition for all students to college.

A teacher’s voice Driving right: Navigating the age of alignment – Monte Syrie (Fall/Winter 2008) This author reminds us that the work of alignment of standards, curriculum, assessment and instruction must be ever mindful of the importance of making connections with students.

Listening to students: The missing component in school reform – Tammy Campbell (Spring/Summer 2009) This article explores the critical role that students must have in educational change efforts.

Rethinking support for school principals – Chad Lochmiller (Spring/Summer 2009) As instructional leaders, principals are essential to the success of education reform.
Leadership still matters
in guiding high schools to success

Leadership in the contemporary American high school is inextricably connected to the issues and challenges related to school and curricular reform and to student achievement. These issues and challenges are to be found in the changing demographics of students, the need to be accountable to multiple educational constituencies, the mandate to apply research-based findings to the processes of teaching and learning, the imperative to collaboratively focus on student data to advance student achievement, the need of curriculum to address in new ways the different learning styles of students, including students with learning disabilities, and the public call to measure the performance of principals and teachers through the mandated achievement of students. Importantly, the era of reform ushered in by No Child Left Behind requires that high school principals and teachers make connections between academic data and excellence and that they employ strategic thinking and innovations in developing partnerships with a variety of constituent groups.

This is a daunting task that requires collaboration and connection in the fullest sense between leadership in schools and the instructional practices taking place within classrooms. Principals and teachers are called upon to exercise their unique leadership talents and abilities to align resources and practices to research-based innovations with proven outcomes of achievement for students. Principals and teachers are challenged to use and understand data in ways that make an impact upon leadership and instructional practices.

As co-chair of the National Task Force on the Principalship of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), and as editor of the NASSP Bulletin, the scholarly and peer-reviewed publication of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), I am constantly reminded of the need for principals and teachers to forge an educational alliance through collaborative leadership that will ensure student growth, development, and achievement in an era of high stakes testing. In practically all instances this new found alliance coalesces in a strategy of school improvement plans and projects whereby schools re-conceptualize their vision and mission for student achievement. Such a strategic plan calls for a reinvention of the roles of both principals and teachers if this collaborative educational alliance is to reap true benefits for student achievement.


Visionary leadership that epitomizes energy, commitment, an entrepreneurial spirit; values convictions that all children can and will learn at high levels...
of achievement; and inspires others with this same vision inside and outside of the school building:

Community-based leadership that is based in big-picture awareness of the societal role of the school; shared leadership among educators and community interests; close relationships with parents, community-based business and philanthropic interests, and community residents; and advocacy for building school capacity and greater resource development;

Instructional leadership that focuses on strengthening teaching and learning, bridging the achievement gap; fostering professional development among teachers; employing data-driven decision making and accountability; and

Culturally proficient leadership that respects and honors diversity among students and views a culturally inclusive educational environment as a benefit for teaching and learning that results in academic achievement for all students (National Association of Secondary School Principals, forthcoming).

For teachers this educational alliance will mean that they will have “to throw open their classrooms to collaboratively focus on student data, share instructional practice, and apply research findings” (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2006). In many schools and school districts throughout the country, the formation of learning communities and professional learning teams is connecting the work and expertise of principals and teachers in creating optimal environments for learning and achievement. This alliance is not an easy feat in many instances because principals and teachers have traditionally viewed their work through different lenses. The research literature is replete with both successes and failures as principals and teachers attempt to create “relational trust” to foster the work of student achievement (Bryk and Schneider, 2002, as cited in National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2006). What remains abundantly clear in this relational journey is that if students are to experience optimal levels of learning within dynamic and creative environments, principals and teachers must become partners in the total process. The traditional pattern of roles where school administrators manage and teachers teach will no longer be sufficient to affect school achievement. Both principals and teachers must become learners and leaders who question, investigate and seek solutions for school improvement (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2006, forthcoming).

As technology has become pervasive in the daily lives of students, parents, and their communities, high schools face the challenge and opportunity to utilize technology and telecommunications to advance teaching and learning and to stay connected with their multiple constituencies. Every prospective parent, student, and interested community member expects to know what is going on at the high school and the use of Web sites is becoming an important vehicle for connecting the purposes and programs of the school to the interests and concerns of the community in which the school is located. Parents expect principals and teachers to communicate with them instantly through e-mail and homework sites. Traditional paper trails thwart efforts of parents to be informed at every moment of their children’s educational journey within the school, and parents expect school administrators and teachers to be available for consultation and guidance about their students’ issues as quickly as e-mail messages can be forwarded. This is an expectation that will only increase as schools become more connected and interactive through use of advanced technological applications. At a more important level, there is a need to discern how technology actually impacts the day to day learning within high schools. To date, secondary schools have made extensive use of technology in disaggregating data about student learning gaps, but very few school improvement plans have deliberately addressed how the use of technology can be conceptualized by principals and teachers to sustain both improvement and advancement in learning. Further, new and emerging structures and collaborations about how the secondary school curriculum and experience will be delivered (e.g., virtual high schools, magnet schools, and dual enrollment agreements with colleges and universities) will require school districts and systems to rethink how to best use technology to respond to a variety of new structural configurations that challenge the traditional thinking about secondary education. This is an area of practice at the high school level that is ripe for research and for dissemination of successful models.

Effective high school principals and teacher leaders will have to learn the ropes of good public relations as a vehicle for garnering internal and external support for the work of the school. NCLB and other high stakes mandates have thrust schools into the public spotlight like no other previous movements in school history. The challenge that school officials will have to meet is to be proactive rather than reactive in the face of new public expectations for the performance of principals, teachers, and students. The degree to which schools can be transparent in their successes and diligent in addressing key issues that impact teaching and learning can determine the types of community partnerships that are possible to support their future goals and activities. No school can tackle the immense responsibilities inherent in teaching and learning today without the support of effective community networks and partnerships. These networks and partnerships require strong connections to the local and state communities.

Getting the driver’s license and first car have always been the dreams of high school students in their quest to exercise freedom and individuality. Access to computers and to the World Wide Web has further increased the abilities of students to forge new terrains of exploration and freedom. Wise school leaders and parents realize that traditional and newly emerging vistas for
communication, learning, and freedom must be grounded in strong values that foster learning, growth, and development in responsible and caring environments. This latter realization remains a prime directive for those principals and teacher leaders who take the charge and responsibility of leading our young people who are diverse in their representation and in their goals and expectations into the future. And, perhaps at no greater time in our educational history is this mandate more needed and appropriate. As Fullan (2001) astutely observes, “Leadership, then is not mobilizing others to solve problems we already know how to solve, but to help them confront problems that have never yet been successfully addressed” (p.3). Leadership still matters.

References


Editor’s Note:

As we submit this journal for publication, we are saddened by the passing of one of our authors. Dr. Leonar “Len” Foster passed away this summer. Dr. Foster was the interim dean of WSU’s College of Education, and had served on the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership & Counseling Psychology since 2003. His nationally recognized research focused upon school principals, school reform, sociocultural influences in schools, higher education, and historically black colleges and universities. Dr. Foster was serving as the interim dean, after the June 26th passing of Dr. Judy Mitchell. Dr. Mitchell had served as the dean of WSU’s College of Education for 11 years. Both outstanding advocates for children will be dearly missed.
Re-culturing schools to become professional learning communities:
A focus on learning

by Robert Eaker and Janel Keating

Significant cultural shifts occur when schools move from traditional practices to functioning as professional learning communities. Everything changes.

A seismic shift
As Andy Hargreaves (2004) observes, “A professional learning community is an ethos that infuses every single aspect of a school’s operation. When a school becomes a professional learning community, everything in the school looks different than before” (p. 48). Dufour, Dufour, Eaker and Many (2006) go further, pointing out that functioning as a professional learning community changes everyone.

Every educator—every teacher, counselor, principal, staff member, and superintendent—will be called upon to redefine his or her role and responsibilities. People working in isolation will be asked to work collaboratively. People accustomed to hoarding authority will be asked to share it. People who have operated under certain assumptions their entire careers will be asked to change them. (p. 186)

Although schools that begin to function as professional learning communities will change in many ways, both structurally and culturally, the most significant changes will derive from a shift in fundamental purpose; that is, a shift from a focus on “teaching” to a focus on “learning.”

This change of focus is more than mere semantics. It represents a seismic shift. It is the unifying principle of schools that function as professional learning communities. Jim Collins (2001) in his study of organizations that had made the leap from being “good” to becoming “great” noted that great organizations “simplify a complex world into a single organizing idea, a basic principle or concept that unifies and guides everything” (p.91). The organizing idea of a professional learning community is the passionate and persistent belief that the fundamental purpose of schools is to ensure high levels of learning for all students—and adults alike.

Changing school culture: Embedding the learning mission
One of the most common mistakes educators make as they work to reculture schools to become professional learning communities is confusing “developing a mission statement” with “taking action.” While writing a mission statement may be a worthwhile first step for clarifying the learning mission for everyone, by itself it is never sufficient and will have little or no impact on school culture. Educators in professional learning communities recognize the need to embed the learning mission into the day-to-day culture of a school. The first step in accomplishing this task is to engage collaborative teams of teachers in a process that addresses three critical questions: (1) Exactly what is it we want all students to learn? (2) How will we know when each student has acquired the essential knowledge and skills, and (3) What happens in our school when a student does not learn? (Dufour, Dufour, Eaker and Karhanek, 2004).
Clarifying what students must learn

Once educators have endorsed the mission of learning for all, the obvious first question that must be addressed is, “learn what?” In a professional learning community collaborative teams engage in processes designed to clarify the essential outcomes for each grade, subject or course. The key word is clarify. Teams do not have license to disregard state and district curriculum frameworks. Instead, teams become “students” of the curriculum by clarifying what each standard means along with the relative importance of each. The process should also address the problem of curriculum overload. Teams in professional learning communities strive to teach less, but more significant content at greater depths and in more meaningful ways.

Creating meaningful learning experiences occurs not only by clarifying and integrating grade level/course essential outcomes, but also by engaging teams in focusing on vertical articulation between grade levels. Stiggins, Chappuis, Chappuis, and Arter (2005) observe that it is useful to meet and work in cross-grade-level or vertical teams regularly. These articulation planning teams tap into state standards and grade-level benchmarks in order to find appropriate grade level divisions and levels of content.

Additionally, conversations within vertical grade-level teams allow staff to understand what was covered in depth the previous year, as well as what will be covered in deep concentration the following year. This “looking across and well as up and down” is a key aspect of clarifying the essential outcomes in each grade-level, each subject or course.

How will we know if students are learning?

Leaders in professional learning communities aren’t content with merely clarifying what students must learn. They engage the staff in addressing an even more difficult question; “What evidence do we have at every grade level, in every subject or course to show that we are living up to our mission of high levels of learning for all students? As Dufour, Dufour, Eaker and Karhanek (2004) write: “If a school was truly committed to ensuring that every student mastered the intended outcomes of the core curriculum, it would be vigilant in its efforts to assess each student’s learning on a timely, ongoing basis. (p. 23). Reeves (2004) suggests that educators emulate their most successful colleagues in music and physical education by providing feedback in real time. A basketball coach does not provide hints about an effective jump shot nine weeks after a flubbed attempt, nor does a great music teacher mention the improper position of a violinist’s left hand weeks after noticing the mistake.

Instead, coaches and musicians provide precise and immediate feedback and suggestions.

Assessment practices in more traditional schools are driven by infrequent, high stakes, summative assessments. Professional learning communities do not ignore the importance of norm-referenced summative assessments, but there is a recognition that students will perform...
better on summative assessments if their learning has been monitored by the use of collaboratively developed common assessments. There is wide-spread agreement among researchers that student learning (and adult learning) is enhanced by the use of high quality formative assessments. In fact, Reeves (2004) refers to common, teacher made assessments as the “gold standard” in educational accountability (p.114).

Importantly, the power of common assessments lies in how they are utilized by collaborative teams. In schools that function as professional learning communities data from common assessments are used to inform individual teachers, as well as teacher teams, regarding the learning of students, both individually and as groups of students. The results from timely, curriculum-based, collaboratively developed, common assessments are essential in determining which students have learned each skill. In addition to determining areas of concern the data are also helpful in identifying strengths.

Ainsworth and Viegut (2006) use the metaphor of a matched pair of bookends. The power standards (essential outcomes) and the final summative assessment are the matched pair of bookends. The differentiated instruction, learning activities, assigned student work, formative assessments, and the re-teaching, additional time and support and enriching are the “books” that typically appear between the bookends. Common formative assessments produce credible evidence about the degree students are understanding and whether or not any other “books” need to be included.

Stiggins (2002, 2005) describes the use of frequent, common, high quality formative assessment by collaborative teams as “assessment for learning” as opposed to the more traditional practices associated with “assessment of learning”. One of the best examples of “assessment for learning” is when teacher teams collaboratively analyze student work. Langer, Colton and Goff (2003) describe a particular approach, Collaborative Analysis of Student Learning (CALS) where teachers discover the relationship between their instruction and the quality of student performance or products. Teacher teams engage in a systematic process to analyze selected student work over a period of time based on identified needs of the students. The CASL process involves collaboration, critical inquiry, and reflective practice. Teachers analyze student work products and work together to design instructional interventions and strategies to meet identified learner needs. One result of this collaborative effort is that teacher teams discover how student understanding/learning evolves and how their instructional practices promote learning. Another result is collective self-efficacy, a sense that we can improve student learning together, ensuring high levels of learning for all students. In short, teams engage in collaborative inquiry where it matters most—in the daily teaching and learning interactions between students and teachers.

Collaborative teams in professional learning communities are confident their students will perform well on summative assessments because as a team they have regularly analyzed the results of their common, formative assessments and made instructional adjustments ahead of time. The practice of teacher teams developing and utilizing common assessments to improve student learning, as well as their own professional practice, is a powerful strategy for ensuring that a guaranteed curriculum is not only taught, but more importantly, learned.

### How will we respond when students experience difficulty with their learning?

Virtually every educator will acknowledge the fact that students (and adults for that matter) learn at different rates and in different ways. Yet, in more traditional models of schooling students are expected to achieve at similar levels at roughly the same time. Cole and Schlechty (1993) describe this traditional approach by observing, “In the factory model … we held time constant and allowed quality to vary. We must stand that on its head and hold quality constant, and allow time to vary.” (p. 10) Professional learning communities address this critical issue by developing a systematic series of interventions to ensure students receive additional time and support when they experience difficulty in their learning. Dufour, Dufour, Eaker and Many (2006) are emphatic on this point noting, “It is disingenuous for any school to claim its purpose is to help all students learn at high levels and then fail to create a system of interventions to give struggling learners additional time and support for learning” (p. 78).

What do these plans look like in the real world of public schools? They vary from school to school, but to be effective Dufour, Dufour, Eaker and Many (2006) urge educators to make sure the plan is systematic—a written, school-wide plan that guarantees students receive needed time and support with the regular school day regardless of who their teacher may be. And, the plan should ensure timely interventions for students at the first indication they are experiencing difficulty. Most important, the plan should direct rather than invite students to take advantage of the support plan.

### The learning leader

The shift from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning requires a fundamentally different approach to school leadership. Learning leaders focus on results. Richard Dufour (2002) makes this point by noting that “learning leaders shift both their own focus and that of the school community from inputs to outcomes and from intentions to results.” (p. 15). The culture of a professional learning community is characterized by the question “was it learned” rather than “was it taught”.

Additionally, a learning culture will require leadership that engages the faculty in an alignment of school policies, practices and procedures with the learning mission. Some behaviors must be insisted upon, but just as important there may be practices that should be discontinued. As Collins (2001) observes in From Good to Great, organizations rarely have “stop doing” lists. He writes, “Most of us lead busy but undisciplined lives. We have ever-expanding ‘to do’ lists, trying to build momentum by
doing, doing, doing—and doing more. And it rarely works. Those who built the good-to-great companies, however, made as much use of ‘stop doing’ lists as ‘to do’ lists” (p. 139).

The learning leader approaches virtually every issue of learning through a framework of collaborative teams. They recognize the wisdom of Peter Senge (1994) when he writes, “History has brought us to a moment when teams are recognized as a critical component of every enterprise—the predominant unit for decision-making and getting things done” (p.354). And, these leaders go beyond merely encouraging collaboration. They create and monitor systematic processes to ensure all staff members work together interdependently to improve professional practice and help more students learn at higher levels. (Dufour, Dufour, Eaker, 2005)

**Imagine this school**

Imagine a school that is absolutely committed to a focus on learning and passionate about ensuring high levels of learning for all students. What would such a school look like? Such a school would reflect, in part, the following characteristics. The faculty and administration would analyze their current policies, practices and procedures in light of their commitment to learning and future decisions would be filtered through this “learning” frame of reference. Collaborative teams would clarify essential outcomes in every grade, subject and course. Assessment results from collaboratively developed, common assessments would be reviewed by teacher teams line-by-line, kid-by-kid and students who are experiencing difficulty would receive additional time and support within the school day. School leaders and teacher teams would be relentless in their study of intervention programs and strategies, noting what interventions are having the greatest impact on student success.

This would be possible because the master schedule would be specifically designed around the principle of embedding additional time and support for students as well as collaborative team time for faculty. In such a school the learning needs of students always comes first, always ahead of the convenience needs of the adults who work there.

There is little doubt that the professional learning community model with its intense focus on learning can be a powerful force for improving schools. By creating a collaborative culture characterized by a focus on learning for all students—and adults alike—the promise of educating all students under our care can be realized. The issue is not one of knowledge but one of will; not one of knowing, but one of doing. If the dream of higher levels of learning for all students is to be realized, schools must make a deep, substantive change—a change from “covering” content to “ensuring” learning. This will not be quick nor will it be easy. However, the stakes are high and the goal of learning for all is indeed worthwhile and should not be postponed.

**References**


For all of my life as a student, my parents have stressed the importance of education. My dad’s military career moved us from base to base and I began my education in an elementary school on a military base. My first years as a student were the fondest.

In the elementary school I engaged in the purest sense of learning. My teacher’s intent to help every child learn a specific concept, catered to the different methods that individual students required. However a change occurred after elementary when I moved on to middle school and high school. One teacher became six and several hundred students were now numbered in the thousands. In this transition, my schooling had somehow become lifeless and I didn't enjoy school like before. My personality and contributions seemed secondary to my ability to memorize and regurgitate information. Students that couldn’t memorize well or whose strengths leaned heavily towards analyzing and creating were seen as limited. There was not an equal opportunity for each student to engage in his or her own definitive learning experience. How did this happen and how can it be fixed?

As an African-American male I have broken every stereotype that confronts men like me when they enter a classroom. Period after period when I stepped into my class, other than me, there were usually only one or two minority students. In these classes there was no name calling, no glares, no physical separation between me and other students. In fact, I often got along just fine with most of my fellow students. But subtlety plays a quiet game. It was a lack of eye contact from some teachers, an oddly overwhelming amount of awe when my performance exceeded that of my classmates, and a lowered expectation of what success meant for me. My teachers often looked at my other classmates with an aura of interest and expectance of excellence. Their perception was clear. I was not worthy of their time. I was not likely to be an investment of energy from which they would ever reap the benefits. Too often they had seen others like me achieve little or nothing. It appeared that in the minds of most of my teachers, by aiming their hope and passion at me they were wasting their time. These teachers instead created a classroom operated on their own tangible definition of “reality”. They operated from an idea that things will never change so why fight them or believe that they can change? “Reality” to these teachers was sifting the group and focusing on the students whose sole appearance implied success, potential and intelligence.

After four years of high school I have experienced many different teachers. Of those, a select few permeate my learning experience today. Despite being uninspired by the majority of my teachers, I find these memorable teachers to all possess a similarity: uninhibited passion. These teachers loved their job in the most unconditional sense. Not taking into account the possibility of students failing in the future, these excited educators regarded every day, every student, every moment with the chance to pass on their enthusiasm and knowledge. These teachers did not link our race or income to our potential. Knowing a student was more than a glance or a name. Their classroom’s reflected the way in which they attacked teaching...every student was engaged and finding relevance in the teachings in relation to their own experiences.

When I look back, these teachers had a passion and a fire they never lost sight of. By offering each student the same unabated excitement, all students were offered an equal chance to use what they had been taught. Everyone wants to reform education by different methods. But discussions and pep talks can’t accomplish equal opportunity for all children, especially students like me. Teachers must be the change they wish to see in education. Relentless passion and effort to change a classroom will provide each student with the opportunity to live out his or her potential. To accomplish social justice, every student must have a chance to feel the fire that is enthusiasm and hope. Only then, will all students feel confident as learners.

A student’s voice

Shane Campbell is a graduate of Lewis & Clark High School in Spokane, and a student at Eastern Washington University.
In two reports, Hodgkinson argues that there is an inherent connection between educational institutions even though they appear to act independently. "Over a decade ago, this author published *All One System* (1985) which presented the argument that a nation’s graduate schools were dependent in part on the quality of its kindergartens, that there was a single system underlying all of the segments, and that only the students ever saw the whole thing" (p. 1).

Since Hodgkinson’s first publication, many states have moved toward implementing P-16 education policy as a “college for all” model aimed at providing greater access to higher education. By standardizing the transition processes students experience, P-16 education policy provides the means by which this end can be achieved. Policies, programs, and practices aimed at easing the strain that all students experience in mapping the course from high school to college are adopted. While the notion of P-16 education encompasses an array of policies and programs that range from early childhood learning to teacher preparation and training, the ultimate goal of P-16 education is the standardization of college attendance, academic success, and degree attainment. Many states have adopted various forms of P-16 education policy aimed at increasing college attendance. These efforts have met with varying levels of success. This is due, in part, to varying levels of commitment given P-16 related initiatives in state level policy arenas (Lutz & Chance, 2005). One caution on the P-16 model: The focus on collaboration and creating partnerships in education flushes out in the open what the Education Commission of the States (Van de Water & Rainwater, 2006) refers to as “turf issues.”

The need for the P-16 education policy in Washington State may be more crucial than in many other states because of its unique characteristics. For example, Washington has a very small, but growing, minority population. Looking to the future, this population will begin to play an increasingly larger role in expanding the state’s pool of “college ready” students. As Washington continues to expand its four-year educational system by adding new campuses, it becomes clear that the students that will populate these campuses will be students of color. Another reason it is important for Washington to move fast forward on its P-16 approach is that it has only recently begun to move in this direction. According to an Education Commission of the States report (Kruger, 2006) 30 states have similar initiatives underway and some of them started as early and 1998. As a late entrant into the P-16 policy arena, Washington is also delayed in analyzing its educational system and its effectiveness as a whole. The positive side of the state being a late entrant to the P-16 education policy arena is that it is now uniquely positioned to gain from the successes and problems experienced by other states. Taken together, these circumstances put Washington in the position to become a model state with
respect to overall academic achievement, access for all, and educational attainment.

As the state of Washington attempts to move toward implementing a P-16 education policy approach to creating stronger ties between the K-12 system, higher education, and other education related agencies, organizations, and services, key questions still remain. Can the different cultures that exist at different levels of education be brought together in a common bond? Will the priorities of the state support broader access to higher education, given its history? This article reports on Washington State’s move to implement P-16 education policy, some of the challenges it is facing and challenges it will face in the future, and offers additional analysis of how the state can prosper educationally through a focus on P-16 education and the effective implementation of policy that supports and strengthens an infrastructure that is already in existence.

**The argument for improving access**

The economic arguments for improving access to higher education are many and have been argued consistently. For instance, a study by the U.S. Department of Education found that the types of jobs being created in our new global and technology based economy will be beyond the reach of many Americans given their current level of training.

One report from the Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research projected that 385,000 jobs demanding high levels of skill would be created by 2010 and that the existing workforce probably could not do them (National Commission on the High School Senior Year, 2001, p. 5). This finding illustrates the economic significance of the college education as a prerequisite for solid labor force participation.

The bachelor’s degree has become an important entry-level credential in the current labor market. When compared with individuals with only the high school diploma, college graduates take home salaries that nearly double their high school graduate counterparts (Henschel, Kirshstein, O’Malley, & Rhodes, 2000). It has been argued that the college degree serves the function of an entry level credential in the new information economy in the same way that the high school diploma did during the industrial era (Pitre, 2004).

A common argument against focusing too heavily on preparing all students for college is that not all students want to go to college or that not all students need to go to college. To the contrary, today’s economy dictates that all students need to at least be prepared to attend college. The low-skill/high-wage labor jobs that were once a staple in the United States labor market during the height of the industrial era are not only decreasing in availability, many of these jobs now require workers to have the same high school curricular background as those students who intend to go on to college (Orfield & Paul, 1994).

While the focus on the economic return on educational investment is one that is well known and widely discussed, what has not been considered with the same rigor are the issues of equity and social justice. Washington’s commitment to equity and social justice has been called into question because of its recent stand against affirmative action. As one of very few states that have ended affirmative action in college admissions, a key barrier to increasing access to higher education in Washington is a commitment to providing “college for all.”

**The disconnect in Washington**

In 1998 voters in Washington State passed Initiative 200, which brought an end to the use of affirmative action in college and university admission decisions. Five years after the passage of I-200, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of a narrow definition of affirmative action in college admission and held that it is of compelling governmental interest (Grutter v. Bollinger, 2003), confirming that race does play a significant role in American society. These legal and political developments have put the state of Washington in an interesting and somewhat unique position given that the higher education system is growing while affirmative action has been banned through the initiative process. This has caused a disconnect between where the state claims it wants to be and where it currently is with respect to social justice, equity, and diversity. An added component to the disconnect that exists in Washington is that the number of racial and ethnic minority students in the state is growing, while the repeal of affirmative action policy has exerted a chilling effect on college admission.

Prior to the passage of I-200, more than half of all students in the state, including racial and ethnic minority students, went on to some form of postsecondary education. After the passage of I-200, only Asian American students increased their numbers and white students remained constant, while African American, Hispanic, and Native American students lost ground (HEC Board, 2006). As of the 2002-2003 academic year racial and ethnic minority students were beginning to make up lost ground with respect to postsecondary enrollments (HEC Board, 2006). Even with the increasing numbers, both Hispanic and Black college age students attending college in Washington represent a considerably lower percentage in the college population when compared to the overall percentage they represent in their age cohort within the state. Consequently, the same low numbers hold true for minority student participation in graduate programs. The merit-based approach to college access perpetuated by this major policy decision does not account for the inherent biases that exist in the education system.

**Social justice and equity in student transitions**

Research on student school to college transitions has expanded to include a focus on the role of social and cultural
Students from different socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds will have different types of cultural capital, but the capital of lower classes will tend to carry a lesser value (MacLeod, 1995) within certain institutional social structures such as schools. In the college preparation and transition processes, lack of cultural capital translates into lower levels of academic achievement, education, and wasted potential and is manifested as a barrier to opportunity (Kao & Tienda, 1998).

According to Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), all classes of people transact cultural capital. But within the educational system, high SES cultural capital is esteemed while low SES cultural capital is devalued. Schools “sanction” and “ratify” and distribute knowledge that is translated into academic achievement (MacLeod, 1995). The academic achievement of high SES students is eventually translated into economic wealth. According to Apple (1982): “Students with access to such cultural capital, primarily through their families, do well in school since educational achievement is determined by the ability to perform in meritocratic tests that measure those skills which the cultural capital provides” (p. 57).

In essence, some differences in academic achievement, test scores, or other measures of merit, can be attributed to social and cultural capital. Social and cultural capital cannot explain all of the gaps that exist in academic achievement and college attendance that are aligned to race and ethnicity, but they do provide clues to closing these gaps.

**Washington’s opportunity to lead**

With an intensified focus on specific P-16 related initiatives and Washington’s unique characteristics, policy makers, agency officials, and other key stakeholders may have an opportunity to move Washington to the forefront of academic achievement and educational attainment. At the very least, they have a clear opportunity to enhance student transitions from high school to college while strengthening the educational system as a
whole. P-16 education policy initiatives have the potential to expand access for all students and especially those students from racial and ethnic minority and economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

A recent study of student transitions in Washington State (Pitre, 2008) found that Washington is no stranger to programs that intend to help students make the successful transition from high school to college. The landscape is rich with resources that have the ability to foster student transitions. That landscape includes 20 different college transition related programs in three categories: 1) Dual Credit/Dual Enrollment, 2) Early Outreach, and 3) Curriculum and Instruction (Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2005). What the study did not find to be present in Washington is the type of coordination of these individual efforts to improve college access in the state that would enhance the overall effectiveness of its educational systems. The Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board (2005) reported twenty different transition related programs serving the nearly 300 school districts in the state of Washington, but did not mention any coordination mechanism.

The state’s history, culture, and political values, the operating relationships that exist between educational systems, the array of transition related programs, and a tripartite system of programs that do not necessarily work in coordination are key pieces for consideration in moving to a P-16 system that works. It is also important for Washington to consider a mechanism for evaluating these important programs. Without rigorous evaluation, it will be difficult for these programs to reach maximum effectiveness.

**Enhancing system effectiveness**

In looking to enhance coordination and evaluation of transition related programs in Washington under the umbrella of P-16 education policy, some existing organizations can provide an advantage to the state in its move toward a coordinated P-16 system which includes policies and programs designed to enhance student transitions. For example, the Washington Council is an organization with a record of coordinating, planning, and collaborating with key educational agencies and has been in the business of student transitions for a number of years. It can, potentially, enhance Washington’s P-16 related initiatives by leveraging its “street-level” knowledge, programs, and networks that span the various educational systems in the state.

Along with the Washington Council, the K-12 system in Washington clearly has one initiative with potential to have substantial impact on student college preparation in the Navigation 101 project. By integrating academic planning, mentoring, and college preparation within the curriculum, Washington seems to have found a set of ingredients for improving college transitions. More involvement from colleges and universities in the state seems to be needed to cement the validity of this program, but it is still an important construct. It is important to note that teachers will be a key to improving student transitions, an element addressed in the Navigation 101 model.

With the pending issues related to graduation and WASL mathematics scores, programs like Navigation 101 become even more crucial in that they help students to focus on the reality of meeting the academic challenges that lie in front of them. Similarly, the Transition Math Project seeks to develop mutual understandings on the level and type of mathematics that students should know and be prepared to do by the time they reach college. This particular project provides a potential answer to questions that have arisen over the lack of cohesion and alignment in the mathematics in the K-12, community college, and 4-year systems, and the assortment of tests students must take. The 2006 scores on the mathematics portion of the WASL served as further notice that the types of rationality proposed by P-16 education policy is not only needed, but necessary for Washington to be successful in the current accountability environment. Local control of curriculum is an important value, but the type of standardization forced upon schools and school districts by the outcomes movement calls for more well thought out approach to curriculum planning and the development of a common core of knowledge that students are expected to command. By including the community college and four-year college systems in conversations with the K-12 system, additional leverage can be gained by sharing more knowledge in the area of mathematics and cultivating additional understandings of what students should know. The goal here should be creating additional alignment within the educational system. A major concern is the variance of ideas that the actors influencing mathematics in Washington have about what students should know. Without collaboration, agreement, and alignment in this key area, many students will be set up for failure. In fact, the lack of alignment could be a partial explanation for academic problems experienced by current and past students.

**Conclusion**

The vestiges of I-200, the changing demographics, graduation rates, and other structural issues pertaining to transition programs and policies make up the unique policy landscape in Washington State. That landscape presents a variety of challenges to implementing P-16 education policy because of the lack of coordination and collaboration between education agencies (Lutz and Chance, 2005). What is at stake is an opportunity for the state to become a national leader. As a late entrant into the P-16 policy arena, Washington is now uniquely positioned to gain from the successes and problems experienced by other states that have moved in the direction of stronger coordination within and between the various components of their education systems.

More importantly, however, is the opportunity to provide increased educational access for the state’s increasingly diverse student population. Washington’s recent move toward creating a system of education that provides
maximum educational benefit through the coordination and alignment of its key education functions comes at an important time in the state’s history. Washington holds key advantages in that it already has a strong base of programs in place that, with additional coordination, direction, and evaluation have the potential to enhance student transitions.

With the tools in place and momentum building in the legislative and executive branches of the state’s government, there is an opportunity for Washington to move to the forefront of P-16 education policy and, subsequently, academic achievement, college transition, and educational attainment. As with any worthwhile opportunity, there are many challenges to overcome. The core question that still remains that will have a decisive effect on whether Washington is able to successfully implement P-16 education policy that enhances transition for all students is: Do Washingtonians value “college for some” or “college for all?”

References


A teacher’s voice

Monte Syrie is an English teacher at Cheney High School.

Driving right: Navigating the age of alignment

My ’94 Protégé pulls to the right, and the only time I know it is when my wife borrows my car and reminds me that I need to get it in for an alignment. She’s right, usually is. But it’s my car. I understand it, and it understands me. We fit. Unconsciously, I correct a bit to the left, and lead my loyal partner through our daily-driving dance. And though I placate my darling wife with patient promises of “getting it in next week,” I never do. In part, it’ll cost more than my car’s worth, and I fear—truly—that I’ll have correctly aligned wheels on a vehicle that no longer runs. Of course, that’s not entirely rational, and my continuing on is taking a risk, but somewhere lurking in my mind is the notion that it’ll be okay. And it’s the same notion in a different venue and on a different level that drives me to take risks in my classroom.

Over the past several years, a great amount of work has gone into aligning curriculum and instruction at the state, district, and building levels. In my department’s last text adoption, we went with Holt Rinehart Winston’s “Washington Edition” primarily because it “correlated with the EALRs.” By now, I’m sure that all publishers offer such editions; however, at the time HRW was first off the press, so they got the nod. Why wouldn’t they? Who doesn’t want to be aligned? And if the “work” has already been done…well, it was the obvious choice. And so with new levels of specificity and an abundance of assessment data, it seems that educators across the state are steering safely down the road.

Of course, work remains and continues. In my department, we’ve spent the last three years working on grade-level, “horizontal” alignment, and we’ve only begun to scratch the surface of the far more complex process of vertical alignment. We’re not alone. Everyone is doing the same work, district to district, building to building. And that’s good. The collaborative dialogue has had a monumental impact on teaching and learning in our state. Examining, clarifying, and aligning what we teach has opened the door to looking at how we teach. Yes, we’re doing great work, but I fear in the end it may be the wrong work. Let me explain.

First, I believe in standards and assessment. I’m a fan of the WASL…well, at least the idea. Second, I believe in collaborative cultures and authentic accountability. We have to continue the dialogue about teaching and learning. Third, I believe in aligning curriculum and sharing best practices. What and how are huge. Fourth, I believe in the power of teachers. We have an immeasurable impact in the classroom. Finally, and most importantly, I believe in the promise of kids. Their potential far exceeds the confines of content, because learning comes from teaching kids, not from teaching curriculum. I wonder if instead of taking the curriculum to the kids, we shouldn’t be bringing the kids to the curriculum. But that requires a side-step from what’s tangible and safe. It necessitates letting the car pull right a bit. It means knowing ourselves and knowing our kids through exploring the
unrealized and untapped potential of both.

Upon entering the profession 12 years ago, I received what I thought at the time was sound advice, “Education’s not about reinventing the wheel.” It made sense to an inexperienced teacher. For a time I begged, borrowed, and stole all that I could. In a hurried, harried existence it was efficient, but it wasn’t effective. It never really fit. I knew it. Even worse, my kids knew it. And so I learned. I began to reinvent the wheel, or rather to modify it to fit me. In a rush of understanding at a conference last summer, I realized education is about reinventing the wheel.

I love conferences. I love that inspired, energized feeling of learning. And for a brief while, I’m on top of the world, but as always the moment fades, and the newly polished practitioner loses his luster. That changed last summer, though, for one reason: Kelly Gallagher. In late August, five of my department members and I attended Mr. Gallagher’s workshop, Teaching Adolescent Writers. Though I’ve had many great learning moments over the past twelve years, none was as significant as my few hours with Kelly. And remarkably it’s not as much what he presented but how he presented it.

He offered the most complete package of writing instruction I’ve ever seen. As silly as it sounds, it’s as if he took all the cluttered, fragmented instructional ideas and dreams in my head and put them together, seemingly for me. And he made it seem so simple. I’m certain that I wasn’t alone in this. The “he-did-this-for-me energy” was palpable in the room. But he didn’t do it for us. He didn’t reinvent the wheel and place it on a pedagogical pedestal for all to assimilate and apply. He made better of the “best” by making it fit him. He did it for himself and his kids. I am not Kelly Gallagher. I am not an understudy who can simply follow the script and fill in.

So what’s the point? Why attend workshops and conferences if we can’t be he or she who’s on stage? The answer I discovered is simple: to learn. Learning is inspiration. It’s that euphoric drive to do and be more. We’ve all been there. We know. But we know, too, that they’re fragile, fleeting moments that are too soon gone—unless, unless we change our perspective and make the best of best practices by making them our own.

Inspiration dies if we don’t put it to work. Best practices abound; they always have. Indeed, I just think we’re more intentional now about sharing. And as we share in this age of alignment, let’s have the wisdom, the courage to reinvent our wheels.

Earlier, I mentioned that we may be doing the wrong work, and I now realize that perhaps this was not entirely fair, for many folks have put a lot of their lives into the vital venture of aligning the work that we do. So I’ll retract it, but only in part because I’m still concerned. My concern is born out of the fear that we believe—on many, probably too many levels—that if we build it, they will come, and this gets back to what I also mentioned earlier regarding bringing kids to the curriculum. Bountiful best practices and astutely aligned curricula are meaningless if we can’t connect them to kids.

Bringing implies leading, and leading is predicated on trust. I’ve often heard from frustrated colleagues the expression “you can lead a horse to water…” What’s thrilling about this statement is that it emphasizes student ownership and responsibility. What’s frightening—no, terrifying—about this statement is the fact that thirsty kids won’t drink. And I have to believe it’s because they’ve been lead to a mirage one too many times in their experience. Sadly, shamefully I’ve presented some mirages over the years, and I know the pain of losing that sacred trust. For the most part, especially later, students don’t trust us. We don’t do a good enough job of making things relevant, and generally, we do a dismal job of making real connections. We spend so much time becoming experts on curriculum and instruction and so little time becoming experts on what matters most: kids. I am not suggesting that we all brush up on our psychology. The solution is much simpler, but it requires more than a discernible drift to the right. For this, we may need to steer off the road.

Last year I risked thirty-plus hours of instructional time. For roughly one hour a week, my students and I engaged in “community circle,” which was loosely-based on the version from the TRIBES program. We sat in a circle on the floor and discussed anything from “favorite candy” to “what haunts us.” This was not easy. I, as you, take my job quite seriously and guard very jealously the time I have with my kids. What’s more, I take my charge as a sophomore English teacher especially seriously. I have to get the kids ready for the WASL. No, I alone do not get students to pass the test, but I’m in their last experience before the big day. So why in the world would I jeopardize crucial contact time for something as silly as candy? A hunch. No, not a data-driven decision. Rather, I believed that an intentional investment in establishing relationships with my kids would create the basis for the trust required to bring my kids to standard and beyond.

Though it was one of the best decisions I’ve ever made, it was not done lightly. In fact, it’s one of my toughest professional decisions ever, for I had to let go. I imagine it’s always been difficult for teachers to trust their instincts and let go. Today, I have to believe it’s even tougher, and tomorrow, I fear, is nearer to impossible. Our heads have made great strides in the last decade, but let’s not lose touch with our hearts. Kids don’t need transaction; they need connection. They need relationships, so when they come to the water, they’re not only willing to drink but also free and bold enough to splash around.

I guess by now we’re talking about something a little bigger than a middle-aged man’s fourteen-year old car that pulls to the right. Indeed, we’re talking about a road paved with good intentions, drivers with extraordinary talent, and passengers with dreams bigger than we can imagine. And it’s for them that we must keep our eyes on and off the road during this critical time in our paramount profession.
Listening to students:
The missing component in school reform

I have always wanted to earn my doctorate, but I knew I could not engage in this rigorous work until a relevant topic really spoke to me. In the district in which I work, and in districts across the nation, educators are grappling with how to increase achievement for all students and how to eliminate the achievement gap. Nowhere is this question more urgent than in our high schools. In an effort to better understand the nature of this problem from the student perspective, our building and district administrators engaged in concentrated efforts to facilitate student focus groups across the district. They inquired, from our high school students, what had worked and what had not worked while they were learners in our schools. In the spring of 2006, after listening to a focus group of high school students from across the district share their educational experiences, I came face-to-face with the compelling and pertinent question that would drive my doctoral research—why aren’t school leaders listening to students more intentionally for school improvement?

“Unless they [students] have some meaningful role in the enterprise, most educational change, indeed most education, will fail.”

Michael Fullan (2007)

Literature on student voice
What is student voice? In the literature, the meaning of student voice has shifted over time from token participation to true partnerships with educators so that students can influence what happens to them at school (Manefield et al., 2007). Student voice no longer focuses solely on student rights and empowerment, as was the case in the past, but rather focuses on the idea that “student outcomes will improve and be more successful if students actively participate in shaping school reform” (Mitra, 2004 p.2 ). Consider the definitions provided by experts in the field. Cook-Sather (2002) describes student voice as authorizing the ideas and insights of young people. Fletcher (2004) defines it as the unique perspectives of young people in schools working in partnerships with adults to plan, teach, evaluate, and lead schools. Holdsworth (2000) elaborates further that student voice “signals having a legitimate perspective and opinion, being present and taking part, and/or having a role in decisions about and implementation of educational policies and practices.”
(p. 355). Synthesizing the thinking of several prominent scholars in the field, for my study student voice is defined as promoting (Mitra, 2004), authorizing (Cook-Sather, 2002) and validating (Fletcher, 2004) the unique ideas and perspectives of students in order to improve schools and student learning.

Examples of efforts to promote student voice that align with this definition include student focus groups with feedback on instructional issues, students as researchers, students on school improvement teams, students attending professional development with teachers, personal expression in classroom assignments, teacher questioning that elicits voice, student-led conferencing, and student-led forums on topics that are centered directly on issues of teaching and learning.

So why would schools want to listen to students? What are the benefits to intentionally using student voice initiatives? Experts in the field have found that students who participate in meaningful voice efforts have increased motivation, leadership skills, and greater engagement in learning. According to Rudduck (2004), a leading expert on student voice, “Asking students what they think about school, and acting on their insights, is one of the most effective ways of improving education” (p. 1). Rudduck goes on to assert that when students are able to talk about teaching and learning, they develop a stronger sense of self-worth and they feel more included in the school's purpose, while teachers benefit by being able to use student insights to improve learning in the classroom. Teachers and school leaders who engage students in student voice have access to the thinking and ideas of those most likely to know what is working and not working in terms of teaching and learning—the students. From a standpoint of best practices in teaching and learning, Delpit (1995) tells us that listening to students allows them to teach us how to teach them. What is most troubling is that those students who struggle academically or socially—emotionally all too often are students of color, second language learners, or students of poverty; the voices of these students and their communities are often muted or even silenced in most schools. Many prominent scholars identify the absence of the voices of these students in matters of schooling, particularly teaching and learning, as one of the primary contributors to the achievement gap (Noguera, 2003; Shields, 2000; & Delpit, 1995).

There is not a more common question in education than: “How do we motivate our students so they are engaged in their learning?” But what if the real question is: “How can we listen to our students to learn how to motivate and engage them in their learning?” What if, by not consulting with students and engaging them in all aspects of school improvement, we are creating disengaged students who are not achieving? It is ironic that the bottom line for schools is STUDENT PERFORMANCE, and yet students themselves have had little voice in educational practice and reform. Consider the thinking of Schor (1986, as cited in Johnston and Nicolls, 1995), “Students will resist any process that disempowers them . . . incessant teacher talk, passive instruction, mechanical drills and the denial of the subject’s importance to them.” Schor goes on to say, “Students yearn to have a voice in their own schooling” (p.94).” According to Cook-Sather (2002), “Perhaps the most essential concept in education that supports the use of the student voice is the pedagogical practice of constructivism in which students are positioned as active creators of their knowledge rather than recipients of other’s knowledge” (p. 2). Inevitably, we must listen to students because students are why schools exist (Fletcher, 2004). Cushman (2003) challenges us to listen to students because they are informants and advocates to educators on what works and what does not work in schools. Students are the producers of school outcomes; it stands to reason they would have to be involved at fundamental levels of improvement efforts (Levin, 1994). In reflecting on the ideas of researchers in the field, it is hard to understand why more schools are not elevating student voice as a strategy of best practice to improve achievement.

In the literature on voice, the most prevalent foci have been on defining student voice in terms of authentic partnerships with adults in schools and on the benefits to students. The question that persisted for me was, how do leaders implement and sustain student voice? What is the role of leaders in building a climate for student voice in schools and what are the actions of leaders who engage in this work? After searching for answers, it became evident that little research had been done on how school leaders foster a climate for voice, and out of this void emerged my inquiry.

**Methods**

My research involved two studies. The first and smaller study took place in the spring and early fall of 2007 when I interviewed building principals to gain a sense of how and if student voice was expressed at the high schools across our district. Based on the data from this initial study, a particular high school was identified as having a strong culture of student voice as a result of the work of the principal. Data from the study indicated that student participation at this high school included students participating in professional development with teachers and the use of student focus groups to inform school practice. In addition, the earlier district focus group data included compelling testimonials from several students attending this high school describing their success at this particular school.

The second, larger study took place during the 2007 and 2008 school years and used action research methods. Both the principal and his administrative team were actively learning about student voice and working on how to implement initiatives at the school. As a result, instead of using a more traditional form of research, I chose action research as a methodology. According to Stringer (2007), action research is “Inquiry that is done by or with insiders in a school, but never to or on them” (p. 3). The use of action research was also a natural fit because of the transformational possibilities it offered in building the
capacity of school leaders by “generating local knowledge back into the setting” (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. xvi) about how to enhance student voice at the school. Also, action research is based on principles of collaboration, democratic participation, and social justice and empowerment. These are the same principles that undergird meaningful student voice efforts.

The purpose of the second study was to explore how student voice was expressed at the school and to identify the role the principal played in fostering a culture of meaningful student voice. In short, did the school promote, authorize and validate the ideas and insights of young people to improve the school and student learning? Because of the collaborative nature of action research, I met frequently with the principal and administrative team to plan the design of the study, collect data, and analyze the results. Students, teachers, and administrators were interviewed for the study. In collecting data from the students at the school, I interviewed students in focus groups of no more than three students. Because we wanted students to have an active role in the study, students were recruited from the focus groups to participate as student researchers. I trained the students on interviewing techniques and collaborated with them in revising the interview questions so they were more “student friendly.” The use of student researchers also ensured we had broad representation of student participants in the study while creating an environment where students might be more open to sharing their insights with their peers. The student researchers selected any two students of their choosing to interview, using the same questions that were asked of the focus groups. I interviewed administrators and teachers individually.

**Findings**

After analyzing the data from the students, teachers, and administrators, it became clear that the school had a culture rich with student voice. The students in the study describe a culture wherein student voice is promoted by staff who:

- (a) signal they are listening to students,
- (b) know and care about students,
- (c) act on student insights with real changes in school practices and policy, and
- (d) ensure those changes improve the school and improve student learning. When listening to students, teachers and school administrators, their perceptions paint a picture of a principal who plays a significant role in shaping the school culture for voice at the school. Students, teachers, and administrators portray a school culture where the principal and the administrative team have a vision for student voice. Acting on this vision, the principal and his team promote a personalized environment, an informal culture, teacher use of student-centered instructional strategies, shared decision-making, and a climate of respect and kindness where there is a “firstness” to students.

Upon closer examination of the culture depicted by students, it became clear that students felt that the school staff were receptive to voice, and once the students’ insights were shared, they were taken seriously and changes ensued that improved student learning. Every student interviewed, either individually or in the focus groups, mentioned the importance of one signal in particular, “eye contact.” Students describe receiving eye contact as a critical indicator that adults were interested in hearing their voice. Other signals that adults send out to students that say they are receptive to voice are providing immediate and descriptive feedback, asking clarifying questions, and answering student questions. From the standpoint of the students, they reported they were more likely to share their insights at the school because staff interacted with them by sending out these signals that they were receptive to student voice. Students also portray a school culture in which staff at the school know and care about each individual student, where they enact real changes based on listening to student voices, and where the students recognized the changes that were implemented as improving student learning. Based on classroom assessments and overall grades, all but one of the students in the study self-reported increased academic achievement since attending the school. What was most compelling was that the students in the study genuinely liked their school, and many of them spoke with such pride about being in a community with adults who cared about them enough to continually elevate student voice and make school a place they wanted to come to every day.

A significant finding of the study was the role the principal played in having a vision for student voice and for acting on that vision. Probably the most significant action that principal engaged in was modeling a “firstness” to students. He relocated his office to an area central to student traffic so he and his administrative team could interact with students all throughout the day in the halls. Students would routinely walk into his office to have conversations with him and he scheduled his day so he did e-mails and paperwork after school. This meant that during the school day the principal was constantly interacting with students in classrooms, in the halls, at assemblies, or in his office. A striking feature of the culture in the school was in the degree of informality and the “narrowing” of the space between adults and students. Power dynamics that tilted toward adults were minimized so that students and adults had genuine rapport with one another. The principal said that he and his administrative team modeled and expected an environment of respect and kindness, where it is always more important to be kind than right with students. Along with modeling, the principal and his administrative team brought in staff developers who provided training on the use of student-centered instruction by school staff. This supported student voice in the classroom, which allowed students to see the relevance in their learning and increase engagement and motivation.

Along with these practices, the principal led staff in creating two structures at the school which also supported student voice. The first structure developed was student advisories in which students meet with an adult for thirty minutes a day, and it was this time that many students and teachers described as being relationship and connection building. The second structure was Peer-to-Peer,
a leadership group of about 25 students who meet with the principal assistant once a month. As an example of how this group provided voice, when the school launched a professional development training, students from Peer-to-Peer attended the all-day training with teachers so they could collaborate with the teachers on how to implement the training in the classroom in a way that would engage students.

**Implications**

What if critical answers as to how to reform schools and fundamentally improve them lie right within the walls of the schoolhouse, within the hearts and minds of our students? In considering the larger implications for this research, the words of Cook-Sather (2002) resonate when she asks, “How long will educators continue to build and rebuild entire systems with limited success without once consulting and authorizing the voices of the stakeholders schools are designed to serve…the student” (p. 2)? For schools this means a new model for an effective school that includes students as full participants in school improvement, whereby students are being engaged as members of the school improvement team, leading research on topics of instruction, attending professional development with teachers so implementation is tailored to the real needs of students, and sharing their insights in focus groups on issues like curriculum, social justice or grading. This also means that universities and colleges need to train teachers on the use of strategies that evoke voice in the classroom while principal preparation programs need to include the presence of meaningful student voice as an important indicator of school success and effective leadership. Finally, policymakers need to consistently convene groups of students and engage in real dialogue on all major policy decisions. These discussions need to be framed without formality so students can speak freely and tell their stories in a manner in which they are truly heard. In this environment, policies will reflect the insights and ideas of the very people who have to face both the intended and unintended consequences—the students.

**References**


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**Tammy Campbell**

is an executive director for Teaching and Learning Services at Spokane Public Schools.
Rethinking support for school principals

As instructional leaders, principals are essential to the success of education reform. Districts expect principals to provide support to their schools on instructional matters, work closely with classroom teachers, monitor individual student achievement, and coordinate support and direction from central departments. At the same time, districts expect principals to attend to a host of activities related to the operation of the school system but largely unrelated to the work of teaching and learning. These activities consume principals’ time, take them away from classrooms, and have been cited as a source of stress for principals (Farkas, et al., 2001). A few districts have recognized that the latter of these expectations undermines the principal’s role as an instructional leader. In response, the districts have sought to increase support for principals and have started rethinking the way that principals access support from the district. Additionally, a few districts have complimented changes at the district level by also increasing support staff in schools.

In theory, these individuals assume the principal’s administrative responsibilities thereby freeing them to spend more time on instructional matters. Admittedly, discussing how districts provide support to principals to free them from the demands of school administration is less appealing than discussing reforms related to instruction. However, if principals are to be successful in their work as instructional leaders then understanding how districts provide support to principals on a host of issues and by what means they do so is an important consideration.

Much of the existing research on the support districts provide to principals has focused on support as it relates to instruction. This research tends to frame other district-level expenditures as administrative waste or part of the administrative infrastructure. The investments that research views productively include: deploying of coaches or teachers on special assignment to work with schools, transforming the role of the principal’s supervisor to focus more explicitly on instructional matters, or investing in robust data systems which monitor student achievement. Clearly, this support is critical and my discussion in this article should not suggest that this support is unimportant. Rather, the purpose of this discussion is to suggest that the instructional support districts provide to principals represents a fraction of the total support principals need to be successful. In reality, support for principals is a complex activity that has administrative, instructional, and supervisory dimensions. Consequently, some expenditures for administrative or supervisory support for principals may be productive as they may free principals to spend more time on instructional matters.

This article represents a modest attempt to contribute to this discussion using the illustrative case of Centennial Public Schools. Centennial Public Schools is an urban school district that could be located in any state. I will refer to this case to frame my discussion. The discussion I present reflects research that I am conducting as part of my dissertation. This research focuses on the totality...
of investments that districts make in support for principals. Moreover, my analysis is considering how districts are reinvesting these investments to support principals as instructional leaders. In the next section, I briefly review the existing literature. Next, I present the case of Centennial Public Schools. Finally, I describe the analytic approach that I am taking in my dissertation and the contributions that I hope it will make to the field.

**Existing literature**

Existing research that has looked at how districts provide support to school principals in their role as instructional leaders has framed district support as a function of instructional reform. This support is often driven by changes in the role or orientation of central office staff, which has been broadly described as central office transformation (Honig & Copland, 2008) or district-wide reform. The two most widely discussed cases of district-wide reform, New York City Community School District #2 (Elmore & Burney, 1997) and San Diego City Schools (Hightower, 2002), have fueled the perception that principals only require instructional support for education reforms to succeed. In fact, discussions related to both districts primarily focused on the support the district’s provided to help principals change instructional practice in their schools. While this research reveals how important district support can be for instructional reform, it does little to describe how districts reallocate resources in order to provide administrative or supervisory support that may help principals focus on instructional issues.

The existing research on how districts use resources to support their staff has largely been confined to discussions related to district expenditures on professional development and, more specifically, spending on teacher professional development. For example, Killeen, et al. (2002) conducted a national analysis of spending on teacher professional development and found that districts spend between one and four percent of their entire budget on professional development. A limitation of this research, however, is that it is not clear how much (if any) of this spending may relate to support for school leaders. Other analyses have focused on total administrative expenditures in districts but not distinguished between productive administrative expenses (i.e., those that support principals) and administrative expenses that are not directly related to schools or school-level activities. One notable exception is a recent discussion of administrative spending in New Jersey, which found that administrative expenditures were often productively related to improvements in teaching and learning and student achievement, a conclusion which runs counter to the prevailing view held by many in the profession (Mensah, Schoderbek, & Werner, 2006).

Within schools, the literature has explored how principals may allocate resources to support classroom teachers or to provide specific instructional opportunities for students. The research on school-level resource use generally holds that the way that resources are used ultimately influences student achievement more than the amount of resources available (Ladd & Hansen, 1999). Research on the ways that resources are configured within schools has affirmed that resources can be reallocated to support education reform strategies (Odden & Archibald, 2000) and that resources can often be redeployed to support reforms more productively (Miles & Frank, 2008). Concerning how districts or schools might reallocate resources to assumed administrative or supervisory responsibilities, the literature is less well populated with examples. One recent exception is the discussion of school administrative managers (or, SAMs) in Louisville, Kentucky (Holland, 2008). The district created school-based business staff with grant support to free principals to spend more time in classrooms. However, much as research on district-level expenditures has not expressly considered how districts use resources to support leaders, the school-level research has not specifically considered how principals might use resources within their build-
leadership support in my dissertation following which I will describe the contribution that I hope my research will make to the field and practice.

An illustrative case: Centennial public schools

Centennial Public Schools is located in a western state and is a large urban school district with an enrollment of approximately 24,000 students. Approximately 50 percent of the district's students are students of color and nearly 65 percent of the district's students qualify for Free- or-Reduced Price Lunch. On the most recent state assessment, approximately 74 percent of the district's students met state standard in reading while 51 percent met state standard in math. The district's superintendent and senior administration have been in place for three years. In that time, they have embarked on a district-wide reform effort designed to bring coherence to its instructional program and address lack-luster student achievement.

The district's reform effort is driven by a clear theory of action, which is predicated on the belief that principals are first-and-foremost instructional leaders. The theory of action states that the district will provide sufficient support to all students, teachers, principals, and schools in order to consistently meet adequately yearly progress and ensure that 85 percent of students meet state benchmarks in reading, writing, and math. The district has pursued its reform effort in phases; the first phase was focused on the support provided to school principals by the central office. The second phase predominately focused on curriculum alignment at the elementary level. The third phase will be focused on aligning instruction at the middle and high school level with state standards and newly adopted graduation requirements.

Even before the first phase of the reform began, the superintendent recognized that principals were spending far too much time on administrative matters. As one principal suggested:

I don't think they [staff in the central office] are trying to be unhelpful, I think they are just busy… I think they have so much going on that it's difficult to get them to focus on the things that I need for my building. For example, I was working on my staffing plan for the next school year – I've got a lot of teachers leaving, most are retiring – and I wanted to see who might be a fit for my building. That was three weeks ago and I still haven't heard back from them. I've had similar experiences with the accountants and budget folks… they always say that they will get right back to me, but it usually takes them quite a while!

The superintendent recognized that the time the principals were investing in tracking down people in the central office or working on administrative projects, took time away from classroom instruction. This represented a major challenge to getting principals focused on classroom instruction and in helping the district implement its reforms.

In response, the superintendent decided to reallocate a portion of the district's budget in new services specifically designed to empower school principals as instructional leaders by centralizing administrative support. Most of these resources were acquired without additional revenue and were primarily generated by asking central office departments to cede positions to help create a centralized office to support principals. The office is led by the deputy superintendents and is staffed by support managers, who serve as the primary liaison between school principals and other central office staff. The support managers have a host of expertise but are largely generalists. They have experience in teaching and learning, school support services, and human resources, as well as other departments such as finance, budget, and maintenance. To assume these roles, the staff redistributed their work within their departments and assumed new responsibilities, which put support for schools and principals at the heart of their daily work.

Principals access the support through the support manager. The support manager responds to specific requests from principals as well as to direct requests from the deputy super-

Exploring investments in leadership support

The case of Centennial Public Schools is illustrative for two reasons. First, it illustrates how districts can rethink their current investments to provide greater support to school principals. The district increased leadership support for principals by reallocating resources within the central office and redesigning roles of staff. This approach created the resources the district needed to address one of the many challenges confronting principals and which prevented them from fully engaging in their role as instructional leaders. Second, the case reveals several of the difficulties in conducting research on leadership support. These difficulties range from establishing the definition of leadership support adopted by the district, identifying and delineating the types of support that they consider part of their leadership support efforts, as well as the complexity associated with tracking various sources of staff and resources. These challenges are magnified in my dissertation, as it focuses on the ways in which two, comparably sized urban districts (re)allocate resources to support principals.

My research utilizes a comparative case study design. The bulk of my analysis is based on financial information collected from the district’s human resource and finance departments. This information illustrates how much the districts spend on leadership support and provides a mechanism for classifying the support into one of three dimensions:
administrative, instructional, or supervisory. To elaborate on this data, I also draw from qualitative evidence collected through interviews with participants in each of the districts. The interviews provide a richness that quantitative data cannot provide and that is necessary for understanding the rationale that guides the district’s investments. Finally, I triangulate findings from interviews and the financial information using documents generated by the districts as well as observation notes written while completing research on-site.

My analysis conceives of support as a complex activity that has dimensions related to the work of school principals. I characterize the totality of support districts provide to principals in terms of leadership support, which Knapp, et al., (2006) uses to generically describe any activity that seeks to direct, support, improve, or assess leadership practice. In addition to this generic conception, my analysis will suggest that there are different dimensions of leadership support, which can be broadly described as:

**Administrative** – represents support provided to principals that assists them with the operation of their schools as well as enables them to create conditions within their schools that support powerful, equitable teaching and learning. This support may be provided from the district’s facilities, finance, human resources, or transportation departments. Broadly speaking, administrative support represents the “business side” of schools.

**Instructional** – represents support provided to principals that assists them with their work as instructional leaders. This support equips principals with information, skills, or strategies to work with classroom teachers and instructional staff to change instructional practice. This support is typically provided by the district’s “teaching & learning department” and may include assistance with:

- **Curriculum**
- **Assessment**
- **Instructional Technology**
- **Professional Development**
- **Specialized Programs for Students**

**Supervisory** – represents both the direction and support the district provides to principals through their immediate supervisor. This support is less focused on classroom teachers and other staff within the school, but instead focuses explicitly on the principal’s own practice. This support may include a conversation between the principal and her supervisor concerning her performance evaluation, efforts to collaboratively plan and present professional development for the staff in their school, helping the principal secure additional support from central departments by advocating on their behalf, supporting principals during conversations with the teacher’s union or in difficult conversations with a parent or guardian.

Put together, these dimensions represent a constellation of staff, programs,
and services dedicated to improving, directing, supporting, or assessing leadership practice within the school district which can be thought of as a leadership support system. I will use these concepts to inform my analysis of the support (and the related investments) provided to principals in the two districts I have selected for my study.

Potential contributions

Understanding how districts provide support to school principals is an important area that the field must understand if education reform is to succeed. This, it seems, is the most important contribution that my research can make - helping districts see alternative support strategies that are not readily apparent or seem impossible given existing resource constraints. Further, it is my hope that this research will show that some investments in central administrative support can be used productively to help principals be more effective instructional leaders. While this article barely scratches the surface of the important questions facing districts, it should provide a glimpse into the type of research that I am conducting in my dissertation to provide insight into the complex understanding of the investments that districts make in leadership.

References


It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the most responsive to change (Darwin, 1859/2005)

Can we really go wrong by doing “what is best for kids”? Today’s education setting stands at a critical juncture; with dwindling resources and increasingly more accountability, the role of advocacy has moved from a desired state to a necessity of survival. Advocacy is, “the act of pleading or arguing in favor of something, such as a cause, idea, or policy; active support” (Houghton Miffin, 2003). What cause, idea or policy do we have in public education that dares to influence the outcomes of such things as policy and resource allocation? (Cohen, 2001) I would like to propose that educators and administrators alike have a responsibility to advocate for the implementation of high quality instruction (HQI) every period of everyday for every child. This focus will be a necessary platform for educators to examine their approach from moving from success to significance.

For years, we recognized teachers that use specific techniques or strategies in a highly effective and consistent manner can increase student achievement. Yet, we fail to advocate the importance and basic need of those strategies to be available for each student, each day and in each classroom. Marzano, Pickering and Pollock (2001), state, “if we can identify what those quality teachers do, then even more of the differences in student achievement can be accounted for” (p. 3). Prior to actively supporting or advocating for something we must first starting by defining what “it” is or in this case what HQI looks like at the local level.

Defining High Quality Instruction
Often educators do not share a common language with which to effectively communicate a shared goal. Yet, I am regularly reminded of the need for educators to continually define and provide context for the vernacular we take for granted. I recently attended a large national conference, where I had the opportunity to affirm this notion by asking a variety of educators what high quality instruction is, or how HQI is defined in their district. Without fail, I was faced with perplexed looks followed by random and ambiguous responses. This experience lead many of us to the following epiphany: Educators need to be clearer about what we are trying to produce. Why do we struggle to define exactly what we want to happen in every classroom? Are we afraid to articulate something that we will all be held accountable to deliver? More importantly, how can we advocate for the resources needed to implement something we have difficult time articulating or defining. After all, HQI should not be the exception but the norm within every school system across this nation.

For educators, HQI is what Jim Collins describes as a ‘hedgehog concept’ in his book from Good to Great (2001). A hedgehog concept is at the core of the world’s best organizational models. Collins notes that there are three intersecting circles or principles to the hedge hog concept; “what is the organization passionate about, what drives the organization’s economic engine, and what can they be
the best in the world at.” (p.) Professionals within these institutions know their respective hedgehog concept, can easily describe it, and understand how it impacts their daily work. These same three principles are easily applied to our work. Are we not passionate about delivering HQI? Do we not believe that the way to improve student learning outcomes is to improve instruction? Finally, do we not want to be the best in the world and delivering HQI for every student, every day?

McKinsey and Company (2007), an independent organization examined, what the top performing school systems from around the world were doing different or better than the rest. According to the report, the top performing school systems stated “the first part of the challenge is to define what great instruction looks like” (pg. 26). As simple or trivial as this may seem, this is a first step that many educators have taken for granted. While we would like to assume that we have moved beyond this basic notion, I challenge each of us to ask the question what HQI is at our institution? Does each of your colleagues succinctly describe how it impacts their daily work? More importantly, is it in the best interest of our students for educators to be clear and consistent in defining what HQI is? If so, start by advocating for a definition of HQI in your district, in your building or in your classroom.

Persistence Trumps Talent

Daniel Pink writes about six basic principles that everyone should consider in their career in his book, *The Adventures of Jonny Bunko* (2008). One of these principles is persistence trumps talent. In many ways Pink describes an urgent need in public education. How can we be persistent in developing, fostering and evolving the capacity of each teacher’s ability to deliver HQI? Why should we be persistent and ultimately relentless in this pursuit? Top performing school systems recognize that teachers are the single most significant influence on student achievement, “the available evidence and research suggests that the main driver in the variation of student learning at school is the quality of the teachers” (McKinsey, 2007).

Teacher quality can improve through continuous quality professional development and focused coaching. Thus, it is critical that educators are persistent at identifying and developing the vital elements of HQI.

No Need to Re-CREATE the Wheel

We have briefly identified the need to define HQI. Fortunately, there has been a tremendous amount of research done on effective instruction strategies. I think it’s safe to suggest that one strategy, in isolation, does not constitute HQI. As with all real professional challenges, there is no “magic bullet” in education. Therefore, it is imperative that educators identify a number of significant instructional frameworks that should be included in every lesson. Frameworks are broad topics that require participants to “make meaning” of what HQI looks like on a daily basis. Instructional frameworks are to HQI as steel beams are to sky scrapers. Unfortunately, in our pursuit to chase false realities, we often jump on the latest and greatest program without defining the meaning of how that will help facilitate and further the development of HQI.

Once you have clarity of the critical elements that define HQI the next challenge is providing the professional development opportunities needed to facilitate a transition and application to the classroom. Currently in education, educators would have enough professional development topics in order to become highly effective instructors, but not enough meaning to change; they have the means but no meaning. In other words, educators possess the professional development but lack the opportunities to develop what these experiences mean for changing classroom instruction. So what? Without creating meaning the system will continue in its struggle to resist the gravitational forces of monotonous lecturing and teacher centered classrooms.

If we were serious what would it look like?

Can we be faithful to the resources available to support what we believe? Many educators have the right intent, yet don’t view the lack of academic achievement as a systemic problem. The school system is responsible for clearly defining HQI and providing the resources needed to develop the professional and educational potential of its employees. Imagine if professional development opportunities were linked and aligned to what the system defined HQI is and a process was facilitated to introduce, apply and master each of the critical elements of the work. Imagine if there was time that was focused to support continuous conversations about how HQI was being implemented, identifying what was effective and what needed to be re-taught. Imagine if these conversations were repetitious and held within the confines of the classrooms where the work took place! Imagine if the people in the organization understood the need to work together to create meaning of their existence, which is to increase student achievement. Would we then move beyond success to significance?

References


WASHINGTON STATE ASCD recently held its annual conference in Seattle. The two days were packed with learning and “ahas” for all who attended.

The following are highlights from a keynote address entitled: “Success and Sustainability: The Fourth Way of Leadership and Change” by Dr. Andy Hargreaves

“This is the day President Obama receives the Nobel Peace Prize. He is a man of the world and a leader in every policy except education. His education policy is heading in absolutely the wrong direction.” With those words, Dr. Andy Hargreaves kicked off the 2009 WSASCD Conference. Dr. Hargreaves, argued that the three planks of Obama’s educational policy are flawed. Performance-based pay rewards a few teachers and does not elevate the vast majority. Charter schools stimulate islands of change disconnected to a continuous and unified educational policy. Lastly, the force to meet annual yearly progress threatens schools. When schools do badly, policy pressures press change through fear not common collaboration and vision. In Hargreaves words, President Obama’s model does not move us forward. Hargreaves calls on us to look around, look forward and to look big and dream. He implores educators to learn from the best practice in education, health, sport, and business across boundaries and across the world. (Contributed by Barry Hoonan, WSASCD Board Member and teacher from Bainbridge Island School District.)

Additional conference highlights and reflections can be found on the WSASCD website.

In addition to excellent keynote presenters and concurrent sessions, another highlight of the WSASCD annual conference is the presentation of awards to individuals, teams, programs and community partners that have made significant contributions to education in Washington.

The 2009 WSASCD Award recipients are: “Outstanding Young Educator Award”, John Norlin, Leadership Teacher, Sumner High School, Sumner School District; “Educating the Whole Child Award” Eastside Recipient, Megan Itani, Special Education Preschool Teacher, Pullman School District; “Education the Whole Child Award” Westside Recipient, Dave LaRose, Superintendent, South Kitsap School District; “Individual Award for Contributing to a Significant and Positive Impact on Student Learning”, Sandy Smelser, School Counselor, Cascade View Elementary, Snoqualmie Valley School District; “Individual Award for the Pursuit of Lifelong Learning”, David Rodriguez, Migrant Student Advocate, Sunnyside High School, Sunnyside School District; “Individual Award for Influencing the Instructional Leadership and Professional Growth of Educators”, Susan Yaw, Migrant Student Advocate, Mountain View Elementary, Quincy School District; “Program Award for Contributing to a Significant and Positive Impact on Student Learning”, K-12 Online Learner Profile Portal Application, Vancouver Public Schools, “Program Award for Influencing the Instructional Leadership and Professional Growth of Educators Beyond the Scope of Its Implementation”, Academic Success Academy, Heather Wren and Jean Licari, Federal Way High School, Federal Way Public Schools; Team Award for Contributing to a Significant and Positive Impact on Student Learning”, Amy Manning and Kelly Hathaway, Thomas Jefferson Middle School, Vancouver Public Schools; “Team Award for Influencing the Instructional Leadership and Professional Growth of Educators,” Lynne Gadbury, Jeanne-Marie Wright, Efthia Triol and Charity Nunnelley, Elementary English Language Learner Program, Vancouver Public Schools and “Community Award for Contributing to a Significant and Positive Impact on Student Learning,” Tish VanRavenhorst, Backpack for Kids, South Kitsap School District and First Christian Church, Port Orchard.

Thank you and congratulations to all of the 2009 Award Recipients.

Plan to attend next year’s WSASCD conference, “Looking through the Kaleidoscope: Focusing on the Learner”, on October 15th and 16th in Spokane.
As you may know, WSASCD was fortunate to receive two 2009 ASCD Affiliate Excellence Awards at the Annual Conference in Orlando this past March. Each year, ASCD grants five Excellence Awards to the affiliates, one for each goal area of the ASCD Strategic Plan. Our affiliate received two of the five awards - the Excellence Award for Diverse, Active Membership, as well as the award for Programs, Products and Services.

The Excellence Award for Diverse, Active Membership is the result of your involvement in our affiliate over the past three years. We have increased the number of members involved in our conference committees, have added new two board positions in the past two years, and utilize our members to serve as presenters, hosts, and on-site coordinators for our regional workshops. Members have chaired various committees and have worked on selected projects. ASCD also recognized our association for our commitment to honoring members through our awards program, which involves eight State Recognition Awards, the Outstanding Young Educator Award, and two ‘Educating the Whole Child’ Awards.

WSASCD is also proud of the recognition we received for our programs, products, and services. We were recognized for providing an outstanding annual conference with nationally known presenters, increasing our number of regional workshops and continuing to sell books authored by our presenters. ASCD also recognized our affiliate for the partnerships we maintain with other organizations, such as various school districts, the educational service districts, and thanks to State Superintendent Randy Dorn, our new partnership with the Office of the Superintendent of Instruction.

To continue with our tradition of providing excellent professional development, we are offering a wide variety of opportunities this year.

Please mark your calendars with the following professional development activities and check our website at www.wsascd.org for details:

- **Pete Hall & Alisa Simeral**  
  *Differentiated Supervision and Instructional Coaching*, January 15, 2010, ESD 123, Pasco

- **Pete Hall & Alisa Simeral**  
  *Differentiated Supervision and Instructional Coaching*, January 16, 2010, ESD 101, Spokane

- **Debbie Miller**  
  *Readers’ Workshop*, January 29, 2010, Yakima Area

- **Debbie Miller**  

- **Robert Eaker & Janel Keating**  

- **Sharon Kramer**  
  *PLCs: Creating Common Assessments*  
  August 16, 2010, Vancouver Public Schools

- **Sharon Kramer**  
  *PLCs: Creating Common Assessments*  
  August 17, 2010, Seattle area

As you plan for professional development for yourself, your school or district, please remember that WSASCD workshops and conferences are appropriate for the use of professional development funds, including but not limited to Title I, Title II, Title III, and IDEA. In education, our challenges are great, but with outstanding professional development opportunities, we will face those challenges and make a difference in the lives of children. Here’s to another award-winning year… Thank you for your support!

Kathy Clayton currently serves as the executive director of WSASCD and has been a public school teacher and administrator for more than 30 years.

Robert Eaker & Janel Keating  
*Professional Learning Communities: What would it Look Like if We Really Meant it?*  
March 5, 2010, Northwest Church in Federal Way, and March 6, 2010, Vancouver Public Schools

Barry Hoonan  
*Creating ACTIVE Readers: Applying Research-Based Comprehension Strategies in Grades 2-8*, April 24, 2010, Prairie View Elementary, Mead School District, Spokane
PREPARING STUDENTS WITH 21st CENTURY SKILLS. Are you and your colleagues using or developing creative ways for the integration of skills such as critical thinking, problem solving and communication into the teaching of core academic subjects such as mathematics, reading, science and history that ensure that students graduate prepared for life? Can you shed light on practical, hands-on tools designed to help districts and school evaluate their integration of 21st century skills for students into current and future policies and practices? Can you illustrate recent research claims of integrations of 21st century skills through stories and classrooms on the front lines? If so, consider taking some time to clearly and persuasively contribute to the intellectual life of the WSASCD community. Please e-mail a 50-100 word preview of your contribution to Jim Howard (jamesh@wsu.edu) and we will promptly send a submission guidelines form for your 1000-2500 word articles. The 2010 spring/summer edition of Curriculum in Context will be published electronically for the first time. If you have questions, please contact Jim Howard at the above e-mail address.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE
Spring/Summer 2010 — February 15, 2010
Fall/Winter 2010— July 1, 2010