

**Leadership and Learning:  
Principal Recruitment, Induction and Instructional Leadership  
In Community School District #2, New York City**

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**OVERVIEW**

Public school principals face complex responsibilities. They are expected to be building managers, human resource administrators, change agents, disciplinarians, cheerleaders, instructional leaders and in some cases surrogate parents. Under the best of circumstances these multiple roles are difficult to negotiate, but increasing pressure for school-level accountability for student performance pushes principals into bearing primary responsibility for school improvement. This role of instructional leadership in the service of increased student learning is new to most principals. (Lambert, 1998, Fullan, 1999, Rosenholtz, 1989).

This paper explores how and why six people in Community School District #2 decided to follow the long and difficult path to the principalship; what supports they received as newly appointed principals; what roles they perceive themselves as playing; what knowledge is required for those roles; how they allocate their time among these roles; how they evaluate their work as building principals as well as how they are evaluated in their work; and how they learn what they need to know in order to be principals. In this study we hope to draw some conclusions that will help school districts, large and small, to support new principals in their increasingly demanding work.

The setting for this study, Community School District #2, New York City, is unusual in many respects. Its overall commitment to large-scale instructional improvement; its heavy investments in instructionally-focused professional development for teachers and

principals; its focus on the principalship as the primary role in school-level accountability for instructional improvement and student performance; and its relatively long history of engagement in fundamental issues of large-scale instructional improvement render the district unique. So a study of principal recruitment and induction in District #2 is not a study of how a "typical" district handles these issues. It is, rather, a study of how principal recruitment and induction fit within a broad, well-developed strategy of systemic improvement. In this sense, District #2 can be seen as a precursor for all districts facing emerging issues of leadership.

The elementary and secondary education sector is relatively underdeveloped in its approach to the cultivation of leadership. In private industry, young college graduates or newly-minted MBAs are typically given positions under close supervision and mentorship. The assumption is nearly always that successful employees will work their way into higher level management positions under the watchful guidance of more senior executives. In law firms, young associates are assigned junior roles in complex litigation and negotiations, usually competing with each other through the quality of their work and, over time, in the quantity of business they bring to the firm; if judged successful, they eventually become partners who share in the firm's profits. Physicians rise to full responsibility in the practice of medicine through a series of stages of increasing specialization and increasing autonomy and discretion in their practice, under relatively tight scrutiny and evaluation of senior practitioners.

In education, the process of recruitment and induction is entirely different. The desire to become an administrator in most cases comes from within the individual, rather than through a deliberate recruitment process. In most school systems there is no clearly defined track one follows into management. Usually, no one taps a young teacher on the shoulder and says, "We think you have what it takes to become a successful principal, and we are going to provide you with the training you need to move to that level." Most of the education and training that prospective principals receive occurs outside the context of organizations in which they will work, and it is designed to be generic in its application across settings, rather than being situated in specific problems of practice. Most candidates are judged to be "qualified" for the principalship when they are certified according to state requirements, rather than passing through a process of sustained scrutiny of supervised practice.

Furthermore, the culture of schools is such that teachers, who constitute the pool from which virtually all principals are selected, spend most of their time isolated from each other and from their nominal supervisors -- another factor which works against the development of leadership skills, and precludes professionals from opportunities to observe the practice of successful teachers and good leaders. Moreover, in most school systems, individuals' decisions to become credentialed for the principalship bear no necessary relationship to either the quality or quantity of the pool of candidates for open positions. "Although the pool of principal candidates is large, and many individuals possess the required certification, there is reason to believe the number of highly capable applicants may be dwindling." (Anderson, 1991)

There are reasons to believe that the demand for principals is growing, as the pool of administrators who began their careers in the 60's reaches retirement age, and takes advantage of retirement incentives offered in many districts and states. About one half of the districts surveyed in 1998 by the Educational Research Service reported that they did not have enough qualified candidates to fill vacant principal positions. The shortages occur among rural districts (52%), suburban districts (45%) and urban districts (47%). The shortages also occur at all educational levels: elementary (47%); middle schools (55%), and senior high (55%).

There are also reasons to be concerned about the emerging demand for new principals and about the characteristics and skills of existing principals. About two-thirds of principals are males, although the proportion of female principals seems to be increasing, from 25 percent in 1987-88 to 34 percent in 1993-94. Female principals tend to have more instructional experience, gathered prior to becoming principals (13 years versus 10 years for men). About two-thirds of principals hold graduate degrees in education administration, although there is no evidence that such training leads in any direct way to practices that promote school effectiveness. (Haller et al. 1994)

The gap between what principals actually do and what they think they should do is chronically large. In a study conducted by Michael Graham (1997) involving over 500 elementary, middle and senior high school principals, more than two-thirds (68%) considered themselves to be general managers, while only one-fourth (25%) perceived themselves as instructional leaders. The average principal reported spending between ten and twelve hours per day at work, with the majority of this time focused on "administrivia", defined as routine duties, paperwork, and phone calls. Principals reported spending less than five hours per week on curriculum, instruction and teacher evaluations. Despite these grim statistics, the participants reported "having received excellent or good preparation in instructional leadership."

As pressure for performance accountability increases, there is evidence that principals are trying to respond to it. In a recent survey of 1300 principals (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998), seventy eight percent of participants reported they use content standards to guide curriculum and instruction. Approximately forty percent of the respondents stated that they needed support in using technology, professional development linked to the standards and parent involvement.

So the principalship in American schools is poised in an important place. Demand for new principals will almost surely be rising, and the nature of the work is changing by virtue of increased external demands for performance accountability. At the same time, it is far from clear that the nature of pre-service education is changing to meet the new demands of the work, or that the composition of the pool of potential principals, either in its demographics or its skills and knowledge, is changing sufficiently to meet the demands of the new work.

## **THE DISTRICT CONTEXT**

In previous papers on Community School District #2, we have outlined the main elements of the district's strategy of instructional improvement, how district administrators adapt to differences among schools, and how the district manages its processes of continuous improvement of instruction. (Elmore and Burney 1996, 1997, 1998) The most important thing to understand about the district context is that it has a coherent, well-worked-out strategy for instructional improvement, focused mainly on, but not limited to literacy and mathematics. This strategy emphasizes professional development for teachers and administrators, focused largely on high quality instructional practice (where "quality" is determined by explicit benchmarks and standards). Professional development is delivered through a large variety of mechanisms, including classroom and school-based consulting, networks and mentor arrangements among teachers and principals around specific issues of instructional practice, and careful monitoring of student performance on an individual, grade-level, and school-wide basis. The linchpin of this systemic strategy is the principal, who acts as the primary agent of accountability for the delivery of professional development within the school and for student performance. System-level administrators

engage in detailed negotiations with principals around what are called "Supervisory Goals and Objectives" each year, based on a review of school performance, the skill requirements of individual teachers in the school, and past professional development activities. Once negotiated, these Supervisory Goals and Objectives serve as the basis for evaluation of principals by system-level administrators, and for subsequent years' negotiations.

Attention to the knowledge, skill and professional development needs of principals has been a central feature of District #2's strategy from its beginning some ten years ago. Among the earliest professional development tactics the district used was the creation of "buddy" arrangements among principals, in which groups of two or three principals worked together on common problems. Over time, these arrangements have evolved into principals working in support groups and formal mentoring arrangements between more senior or highly skilled principals and newer principals or those who are judged by district administrators to need work in specific areas. Group meetings of principals in District #2 are focused almost entirely on instructional improvement issues and professional development. Monthly principals' conferences, for example, last all day; they are frequently held in schools and involve classroom visits and discussions of practice. They are focused on specific topics, generated either by principal committees or by district administrators, that are related to the district's overall instructional focus in literacy and mathematics.

So District #2 came to the issue of principal recruitment and induction with a relatively rich system of managerial processes and supports for principals already well established. Recruitment and induction became an issue as district administrators looked at the existing principal force in the district. Most were women, recruited out of the ranks of exceptional teachers, moved into principalships in mid-career, and now, in many cases, approaching the final years of their careers. About three years ago, Anthony Alvarado, then Superintendent of the district, and Elaine Fink, then Deputy Superintendent, began to see a looming crisis. As more experienced principals approached retirement or were lured away from the district by higher-paying suburban districts, District Two faced the prospect of finding highly-qualified candidates for the vacated positions. The knowledge and skill levels of these candidates had to be very high by the district's standards or the district would risk losing ground in its overall strategy of improvement. Attention to the issue of principal recruitment and induction emerged in a context of prior investments in principals' learning and an impending shortage of skilled candidates for vacated principalships.

Acknowledging this crisis, the district initiated two new activities; one focused on recruitment, the other on induction. The first was the Aspiring Leaders Program (ALPS), designed to recruit new candidates for the principalship from the ranks of teachers, professional developers, and support staff within the district and to provide them with an intensive one-year program leading to certification for the principalship. The first year of this program, school year 1996-97, involved an alliance with Baruch College. Essentially, the district selects the participants, 8-10 per cohort, and pays the full cost of the program for each participant. The curriculum is jointly planned and taught by district personnel (usually senior principals) and by faculty of the cooperating higher education institution. District personnel contribute specific skills and knowledge related to the principal's role in professional development and instructional improvement; university faculty contribute more general content related to the state's certification requirements in such subjects as law and finance. Hence, ALPS provides a steady supply of credentialled candidates for the principalship in the district, who have already passed an initial quality screening by virtue of their experience in the district, selection from a competitive pool, and completion of a preparation program that meets the district's own requirements for entry-level knowledge of the principalship. Participants perform shadowing activities and internships as part of the program and are often drafted into administrative support roles such as running

supplemental summer programs after they have completed the program. In the last year, the district has introduced a requirement for admission to the program that participants must commit to accepting one of the first three principalships they are offered in the district. Since many of the participants come out of the ranks of talented teachers and professional developers in the district, they are sometimes reluctant to give up their positions for the principalship, even though they are credentialed and trained.

The second new component is not actually completely new, but rather a newly formalized and structured principals mentor system focused mainly, although not entirely, on the induction of new principals. "Buddying" and networking— both forms of mentoring in some respects -- have been a part of the array of professional development activities for principals from the beginning of the district's improvement strategy. What was new about the mentoring system, introduced in the 1997-98 school year, was the formal designation of mentors from the ranks of senior and high quality principals, their assignment to new or struggling principals, and perhaps most importantly, formal acknowledgment of the mentor's role by providing supplemental compensation for the work. Principals assigned mentors are not exclusively new principals, some are more experienced and judged by district administrators to need help; but all new principals are assigned mentors as part of their induction process.

During the current school year, we began studying six newly-appointed District #2 principals, and we will continue to follow them throughout their initial school year. As of September 1999, District #2 appointed nine new principals, of whom six were new to the principalship. We have chosen to focus on the six new inductees, so as to maximize the likelihood of learning about the process of recruitment and induction. We have interviewed each principal at each school several times; we have observed them in action in their schools, attended meetings with them, reviewed their Supervisory Goals and Objectives for the school year 1999-2000, and attended staff development sessions with them. We also conferred with the mentors for each principal. Among the issues and questions we pursued were:

- What trajectory led individuals to the principalship?
- What influenced their decision to become a school leader?
- What deliberate preparatory experiences did they initiate?
- What other helpful experiences prepared them for this position?
- What perceptions influence their thinking?
- How is instructional leadership thought about and practiced (theories in use and espoused theories)?
- Of what value is the mentoring relationship?
- What particular personal qualities influenced entry experiences?

## **THE PRINCIPALS AND THEIR SCHOOLS**

### **School A**

Located on the West Side, just above Greenwich Village, School A serves a diverse, multicultural population of approximately 400 children. Asian student enrollment is growing, as is enrollment of children living in a nearby shelter. The school currently serves kindergarten through 7th grade students and will expand to include eighth grade next year. Its stated goal is to provide every student with a rigorous, standards-based, interdisciplinary curriculum, designed to foster critical thinking. School A's literature describes a major focus on literacy, and a shared decision-making structure. Of the 34

teachers on the faculty, 17 are new to the school this year with teaching experience ranging from 0 to 10 years.

The principal is a graduate of New York City's Catholic schools. She attended Teachers College for her principal certification and says she found her coursework "helpful in some strange ways." A course in Ethics helped her to approach her work thoughtfully. She says she thinks about the politics and policy courses every day as she attempts to set policy, make sure it works, and decides whom to include or exclude. She says, "What I have learned there has really helped me looking at the school from different perspectives - [the] culture perspective - [the] human dynamic perspective. I am always thinking of that. I don't know if I would have had the language to necessarily think about it that way if I didn't have the courses."

In the early part of her career, Principal A taught special education and was part of The Bank Street Demonstration Project from 1980-83. With the Project, she participated in developing a bilingual special education program, which she describes as, "really where I got my training." In addition, she worked as a staff developer with the UFT for nine and a half years. During that time, she was part of the leadership team, and worked extensively with SURR schools (schools under review, because of failure to achieve adequate progress). She also taught college level courses through the UFT. She is now working on her doctoral dissertation at Teachers College.

Working as a trainer of teachers and as a facilitator with principals in restructuring schools, Principal A eventually found herself drawn to the challenge of leadership. Encouragement from colleagues and family members, who viewed progression from teacher to principal as evidence of achievement and success in the education profession, provided further incentive for her to pursue principalship. Like many of her colleagues, this principal spent the first months in her new role trying to build a learning community within her school. She did this by reorganizing the physical space -- dividing early childhood, grades 3-5, and the middle school grades into three separate wings. This design is intended to foster a sense of team and identity, and build relationships that are caring and collegial. Each team of teachers has a common planning time, however, Principal A acknowledges that, "Simply designating a group 'a team' does not make them a team. Our work over this year will be to develop effective ways of communicating with one another which are defined by dialogue, reflection, collegueship, and professionalism."

Principal A structures her day by preparing a written schedule. She finds that if she writes it down, she will stick to it. There are three categories of time: "office junk/administrivia;" the "work with teachers that I need to do -- meeting, observing, being in the classrooms; and meeting time for parents, district personnel, and outside visitors." She believes that the only way she can keep on top of her responsibilities is by working at least twelve hours a day, and then taking work home. She reserves the weekends for her personal life, friends, and family. With so many new teachers, Principal A works hard to convey and reinforce the district literacy and mathematics mandates while she herself is also learning. Without the help of staff developers provided by the district, she believes the task would be impossible.

Principal A describes her plans for her own professional development over the year as follows:

This year, I am working on the dissertation phase of my doctoral degree. Perhaps the most valuable part of this process is the enormous reading required at this stage. My focus is on new school cultures which in many ways matches current life at [this school]. The readings and my own writing

is helpful in illuminating new ideas and deeper understandings about school culture which I am consciously applying in my work at schools.

The second aspect of my professional development will be inter-visitations to other schools with similar populations and needs as our school. Walk-throughs with other principals in their schools and critical dialogue about what we see will be helpful in shaping my own ideas and their application.

The third component of my own professional growth is working with my mentor. Her mentorship since the summer has already been invaluable in organizing technical aspects of the school as well as the more important instructional guidance.

## **School B**

In an affluent community on the Upper East Side, School B enrolls 500 students, grades K-5. It is a national demonstration site for the whole language, process approach to literacy, and its previous principal is a widely recognized expert on literacy instruction. The school's literature describes a rigorous, learner-centered environment, with emphasis on interactive classrooms, real world problem-solving, building life-long literacies, and a love of language and the arts. To that end, instrumental music and dance are part of the children's daily experience, and through a partnership with IBM and Teachers College, students benefit from state of the art technology. Newly built playgrounds and an auditorium, along with existing small library/reading rooms throughout the building contribute to School B's impressive physical plant. In addition, the school is within walking distance of museums, parks and cultural institutions.

School B's new principal was an elementary teacher in one school for six years, where she taught grades 3 and 1. Describing her move from third grade to first she said, "I taught a summer kindergarten program [because] I didn't have any primary elementary experience... so I taught the summer school kindergarten program because I wanted to learn it... I did that for 2-3 summers and then I taught first grade." She then taught at a private school for one year. After that, she served as a staff developer for Lucy Caukins (a leader in literacy training).

Principal B majored in English at Lafayette College. She states: I had no idea of what I wanted to do. I thought maybe banking but that was not right so I went into the garment center for a year and a half and I worked as a buyer and then in a showroom. I was completely out of my element...it was a fun year and a half .I did not like having a job that had nothing to do with my life - I wanted my job to be my life--not just something that you do from nine to five.

So, she enrolled in a graduate program, receiving a master's degree at Teachers College. She enjoyed her time in this program noting, "They give you a very wide view of things... some of the people you meet --Dorothy Strickland and Maxine Greene -- having classes with them...I loved it."

She goes on:

The preparations courses did not help... the student teaching helped - I student taught ...with a lovely teacher... I really learned about 'tone of the classroom' from her - not too much curriculum - but she gave me a tremendous amount of time to

work with children - to write a play with them - to perform it - she was incredibly supportive - and was so happy about being a teacher that I think that experience alone made me realize how wonderful it was ...I then went ...to work with a teacher and [people at Teachers College] said that he was not a very good teacher but you will make him a better teacher and I said, "I don't think I can teach anyone anything about teaching - and he was a really horrible pathetic teacher - because of that experience I asked [them] to find me a third spot. I worked with a math teacher who had the lowest half of the lowest group of kids - in the 7th and 8th grade and it was wonderful - she was dedicated and I loved working with the children - some of them were almost adults...

Describing her cooperating teacher she states:

[She was] always in some argument with staff and the principal...she would get one idea and drive it into the ground when it was not working with the children- she was passionate and really wanted to do much harder math than they were capable of - and did not really know how to give them the support to get there.

Principal B's takes some of her inspiration from her mother who was a teacher. She reflects:

I probably always assumed that I would be a teacher...it just seemed natural...[today] student teachers are smarter - programs [have] tightened up... my supervision as a student teacher was pathetic...just non-existent...I am not sure that the supervision has gotten better...[however] the responsibility felt by cooperating teachers has definitely improved...cannot say that for all schools but can say it for [some schools]...[there is a] much greater sense of responsibility to mold teachers for the future.

Regarding instruction, Principal B states:

I am trying to figure out what size band-aid to put on different things. I am not even attempting to fully address anything completely. I am stepping back more...[to] completely understand the working of the school... the band-aids have to go on in one of two places - on the management/administration or on the instruction... every Sunday night I write out a schedule and I put in what classrooms that I want to visit...[I] do a lot of my instructional work with teachers after school

Principal B is reflective regarding her own learning as evidenced by this excerpt:

There are questions that I am dying to ask other principals but if I hear the answer I think I might be devastated and it is so interesting because I get upset if teachers do not want to work outside their classroom if they don't want to have conversations and collaborate and I think to myself, how could you not want to do that you could think about your practice and work on it - and I am doing the same thing the school is now my classroom...I just want to hunker down and be in the school and get it humming and then I will venture out.

Principal B describes her personal professional development plans as follows:

Much of my professional development takes place in the classrooms and in

conversation with the teachers at this school. Observing and participating in the literacy work in the classrooms of [four teachers she names] provides extensive professional development.

I will participate in the district principal support groups as well as the study group that are provided by the district...[be] in weekly contact with my mentor principal; provide staff development to the new teachers in the building; plan weekly staff meetings and lead grade meetings...work on my own math knowledge this year, attending workshops and observing math lessons as often as possible...as always, I will keep up with literacy work through publications such as *The Reading Teacher*, *Language Arts*, *The New Advocate*, and *Primary Voices*. I will also choose books to read along with the staff.

## **School C**

Located in midtown Manhattan, School C enrolls 800 children in Grades PK-8. The student body includes children of diverse linguistic, ethnic, socio-economic and racial backgrounds. The building is relatively new, by urban standards, and contains an Early Childhood Wing with a separate entrance, large gymnasium, auditorium, full lunch room, a library/media center, and a well-equipped computer lab. According to the school's literature, the professional staff, including 32 new teachers, "is committed to providing the best education...by continually assessing students against specific benchmarks and designing our teaching to facilitate the child's progress to meet the benchmark standards in reading, writing, and math."

Before becoming a teacher, Principal C was enrolled in law school; she was also a parent with children in District 2 schools. As an active participant in school activities, she became acquainted with Superintendent Alvarado, and decided to switch her career goals from law to education. She earned a bachelor's degree from Fordham University, and a master's degree from Bank Street College of Education. She has worked in District 2 since 1996. Prior to her appointment as Principal of School C, she taught second grade for three years and fifth grade for one year. She was designated a Distinguished Teacher at one of her previous assignments; in that role she worked in one of the district's lower-performing schools as a combination teacher and staff developer.

During Principal C's studies for her master's degree, a supervisor recommended that she switch her concentration from teacher education to administration. Upon reflection, she recognized that all her life she had been a successful leader. From that point on, she looked at principals and other leaders in a different way. She became an avid observer; analyzing decisions, the path that took leaders to their positions, how they led, what they read, and she started to emulate their behaviors. She observed her own principal: how she ran faculty meetings, how she related to teachers, how she continued to learn, and what areas of school management were important to her. She had many mentors over the years and says, "There is a little bit of them in me."

She says she always makes "sure that [she] is in the company of those who are successful which is something [she] did even as a child." She comments, "If I wanted to play bridge, I always played with the best, so I started putting myself in situations. If someone knowledgeable was having a Standards Meeting and I wanted to go to it; just being in the company of smart people and learning from them." Principal C entered the Principal Certification program, and felt that although the classes were sometimes inspirational, for the most part they were not very practical. She states: "I guess my leadership courses and

studying Sergiovanni and reading up on leadership has helped me, but that is the only thing that has helped me. Now that I am in this job for four months, I don't think I have used anything that I learned in my graduate courses that is helping me to be successful here."

She finds that the everyday events and problems she encounters were never addressed in her coursework. She says, "I don't think I have ever met an administrator that said 'I went through an administrator's program that really prepared me' - every principal that I have worked with has said -'I went through it -it got me certification - and now I can learn on the job.'" Other preparatory experiences Principal C cites include personal reading (particularly books by practitioners such as *Going Public*, by Shelley Harwayne), participation in study groups, and observations of successful principals. Early in the school year, Principal C expressed some concerns regarding the district's expectations of her.

I don't know if they expect me to get the scores up since I am so new. I think they expect me to create community and put in place some initiatives that I try to implement. I know the big thing is the scores and percentages...they expect me to work on the literacy piece...have teachers get kids engaged in books; more parent involvement.

In our recent interview, she stated that she was extremely overwhelmed at the beginning of the year, partly because she didn't know when to say "no," and was pulled in many different directions. Union issues in the building also caused a great deal of stress. Some of these issues have now been resolved -- some by the district office, and some through the help of her mentor -- and she is feeling more confident. Principal C has a vision, and a direction, even though she still has a number of teachers in her building who are ineffective. She is trying to find a balance between when to push and when to stroke people to help them do better work.

She describes her personal professional development plans as follows:

I continue to read many books and articles concerning teaching and learning. I have read several books this past year and have purchased some for my staff members. These include: *Beyond Discipline: From Compliance to Community*; *Mosaic of Thought*, *Beyond Traditional Phonics*, *Phonics They Use*; *A Teachers' Guide to Standardized Reading Tests*, *Best Classroom Practices*, *Questioning the Author*, *Why Workshop*, *Mapping the Big Picture*, *Classrooms that Work*; *Schools that Work*; *A Time for Meaning*; *Word Matters and Life in a Crowded Place*. My continuous reading keeps me abreast of the latest philosophy on the teaching of reading and writing and demonstrates to my staff that I am continuous learner.

In addition, the monthly principals' meetings serve as a guide to District 2's goals for professional development and academic growth. These meetings provide me with the knowledge and support as to how to direct resources at the school level to meet the district's initiatives.

The visits from the Superintendent, Deputy Superintendents, and my mentor provide me with a focus to see what needs I still have to address. My own visits to other schools provide me with another dimension. The constant dialogue with colleagues, staff developers, district office personnel and teachers assist me in my own professional development and help me reflect on my work.

## School D

School D, also on the Upper East Side, enrolls 500 children in grades K-5. It is a relatively affluent and international community. The school-based management team has coordinated a number of major initiatives, including redesigned parent progress reports that support the school's child-centered philosophy; a Curriculum Handbook that lists expectations and learning goals in all subject areas; and a focus on technology integrated into all instructional areas. A primary goal of the school is to encourage children "to explore, solve problems, appreciate literature, and think critically and independently in an exciting, hands-on discovery environment."

Principal D taught for nine years and then left teaching to become a social worker and therapist in a hospital setting. In 1991, she returned to education, accepting a central office directorship in District 2, a position she held until her appointment as an Interim Acting Principal. This was not her first leadership position, and when she took the job, Principal D was still undecided as to whether it was what she really wanted. However, the recent salary increase awarded to principals amounted to a \$14,000 raise over her previous position, thereby increasing the likelihood that she would accept a permanent position as a principal.

Principal D says her certification courses were not helpful. She felt that both the caliber of instruction and the expectations for students were very low. She says: "I didn't even feel that my colleagues challenged me in the large part. The only course I enjoyed and learned from was the law course, because I had zero background there. The other courses that I had did not challenge me...the courses were easy. The internship I did was my job."

Principal D is working hard to create a community so that she can really work with the teachers and parents. She expresses concerns about polarization among her staff -- between union and non-union teachers, and between older and younger teachers. Dealing with "administrivia" and the loneliness of the job frustrates her. One of her major challenges is to motivate some of the more experienced teachers to think about change or to try new things. Another of her concerns is the lack of time and support in dealing with minutiae. "What I really need is...I get these memos and I just want someone to say you can throw that out... sometimes I don't know what to do with it."

Four months into the job, Principal D says, "I never know when the school is going to blow up. I feel I am holding on tight to so many things that any little imbalance could shake it up some." On the other hand, the "sense of community with my kids and staff ...shared values" have encouraged her. She adds, "I think I like so many things and I am really surprised."

She describes her personal professional development plans as follows:

As a new principal, professional development will be essential for my own growth. I particularly need to strengthen my understanding of the literacy curriculum and plan to attend in-house and district professional development as well as seek opportunities at the university level. Throughout the year, I will attend workshops and seminars with staff members to support the instruction in our school.

To further my learning, I plan to work closely with the staff developers. Continual consultations, collaborative walk throughs and shared reflections will keep me focused on what needs to be addressed.

The monthly Principals' Conferences provide me with information and support on how to meet the district initiatives. My attendance at Principals' Conferences over the last few years provided me with a framework that made it possible for me to consider the position of principal at [School D]. This year the Principals' Conferences will also serve as a model for my own faculty meetings.

Much of my professional development has been in the area of standards. This year, I plan to build on my work in the New Standards. Three faculty members and myself will attend the Standards Network. I also plan to participate in a Principal Study Group for Standards.

I have taken several math workshops such as TERC Institutes and Math Solutions which will enable me to assist staff members. I will strengthen my understanding of math by observing the staff developer in classrooms, conferring with colleagues and attending seminars and summer institutes.

I look forward to working with my mentor principal. I welcome the support and am looking forward to working together on identifying areas of needed improvement, ways to enrich the work and enhance my own thinking about teaching and learning. Many of my experienced colleagues have offered support and assistance and extended an invitation to visit their schools. Intervisitation will be an integral part of my professional development. The combined efforts of colleagues and the District Superintendent and the two Deputies have made it possible for me to tackle a new and demanding job.

I will also participate in the Principal Support Group. The exchange of ideas and collegial sharing at our first meeting has helped me to look at my school with a sharper eye. I welcome the leadership support provided by this forum.

As I have never written an observation report, I will need training in this area. I plan to participate in the collegial study group focused on writing observations and strengthening instruction.

I have read and will continue to read books concerning teaching and learning. I have just read *Shaping School Culture*, and I am now reading *Word Matters*. Additionally, I have acquired a long list of professional readings which can support my work."

## **School E**

Located in a relatively affluent neighborhood on the East Side, School E enrolls approximately 560 kindergarten through fifth grade students of diverse cultural and ethnic origin. The school is a School-Based Management site, where the staff is committed to building a community of excellence. Teachers are reported to share a common philosophy based on progressive and innovative teaching methods. Their goal is "to develop motivated learning; children who ask questions, obtain information from many sources, use problem-solving skills, and are curious about the world around them."

Principal E is a product of the New York public schools, and she concedes she was not a good student. She earned her BA and MA from Fordham University. It wasn't until she got to college that she began to enjoy academic success. Once she got to college, she experienced high quality teaching, which engaged her in learning, and she realized that school didn't have to be all rote memorization and drill. That's when she decided to become

a teacher, hoping to make learning exciting for kids. She taught high school for six months in Queens, then, in 1994, entered District 2 as teacher of a 5th and 6th grade bridge class in the school where she is now principal. After a year as the school's science coordinator, she spent two years as assistant principal of a middle school.

Principal E always wanted to be a principal. She describes having been inspired by Superintendent Alvarado who spoke to her class while she was enrolled in a graduate degree program. When she first started teaching, Principal E knew that she could make a difference for kids, but that if she really wanted to change a school and eventually have a wider impact, she would have to become a principal. She cites many important mentors.

Principal E believes that we must change teaching. "I look at what we do in schools - basically there are two things that happen; either we change teaching or change the kids that come to school. [I am] more interested in changing teaching than changing the kids." In September, she said:

I am overwhelmed every day. I try to get in classrooms every day. Unfortunately the administrative junk gets in the way...Elaine expects me to get things moving, clearly articulate the vision, respond to perceived needs and look at my goals. The teachers at this school are not very receptive to professional development. They have strong personalities...there is some hope for them.

She tries to push teachers to try new things by sending them to conferences and meetings that she thinks will interest them. She then expects that they will come back to school and implement what they have learned, and share their learning with colleagues. She is very pleased that in many cases the strategy is working.

When Principal E first assumed her leadership role at this school, she took active steps to create a sense of community. She is beginning to identify the best teachers, and giving them leadership responsibilities, making them participants in the decision-making process. She brought in an administrative assistant of her own choosing, and finds that she and her assistant are working well together, which helps her to keep up with the workload. She has stressed to teachers that using data from test scores and from their own observations must be the driving force behind instruction, and thinks that faculty are beginning to internalize that message.

She describes her personal professional development plan as follows:

As a new principal in the district, it is essential that I take advantage of professional development opportunities that will guide me in improving instruction in my school.

The Principals' Support Group has been very helpful to me. It is a forum that allows me to share my struggles and receive feedback from my colleagues. I have taken a few things back to my school and implemented them.

Professional readings help me to develop a greater understanding of instructional practice. As a member of NCTE, IRA, ASCD, and NSTA, I have regular opportunities to examine current research. Talking with my colleagues and reading reviews of professional books guides me in my choice of readings. Currently, I am reading (with my faculty) *Spelling K-8* by Diane Snowball. My recent readings include: *School Culture* by Terrance Deal and Kent Peterson, *Reading for Life*, and *Punished by Rewards* by Alfie Kohn.

Working with staff developers will help me develop a greater understanding of effective literacy and math instruction. Specifically, I will be working with my staff developers on observing and conferencing with teachers. My goal is to make observations and meeting time as effective a learning tool as possible. I want my teachers to see observations as an opportunity to receive feedback on improving their instruction.

I will focus much of my professional development and professional readings on developing a greater understanding of rigorous literacy instruction. Through intervisitations with my mentor's school, and other district schools (Focus Literacy and Non-Focus Literacy), I will spend time in classrooms that work and bring back what I see to my school.

## **School F**

School F is located "downtown," on the border between Little Italy and Chinatown. Enrolling 600 children in Grades PK-8, this Title I school serves a multicultural population, including many children from immigrant families where English is not spoken at home. Staff "is comprised of experienced and novice teachers" all of whom are "encouraged to expand their horizons...through a wide variety of staff development opportunities. The faculty may attend frequent workshops...then share their new learnings."

Prior to pursuing her current role, Principal F was a Registered Nurse working as a school nurse. While working in that capacity, she considered becoming a teacher, but instead returned to college to work on a doctorate in art history. Eventually, she dropped out of the program because she found the reading boring; however, while in the program, she taught art appreciation at various museums, and was impressed by the power of words and her own ability to communicate with students, mostly adults. After that, she sold art for many years, until a downswing in the stock market caused the art market to dry up. Her husband was unemployed, and in desperation, she became a substitute teacher at her neighborhood school. After a week, the principal offered her a teaching position, and the course was set.

From the beginning, she loved being a teacher. Eventually, she became a staff developer focusing on the teaching of reading and writing. From there, she began to think about a leadership position. Principal F had many important mentors in her teaching career, including staff developers and principals. She became a teacher leader and worked with (she mentioned three people). She was also a part of think tank on literacy. Though always wanting to be part of a community, wherever she went, she was pushed or pushed herself to become a leader. Eventually, she realized that if she became a principal, she could be both a leader and a part of a learning community.

In addition to the formal certification program, Principal F took a number of courses including one with Leslie Zackman, and participated in the Writing Institute in her first year of teaching. She says that some of the courses in her certification program at City College were very good, and gave her things to think about, such as how to affect change and how to solve problems. However, she adds, "generally the people who were enrolled in the program were just not very interesting to me; they were there to go through the process. Typically these professors would have some decent project but no one would want to talk about it."

When Principal F was first assigned to her school, she found teachers and parents polarized over the removal of her predecessor. She believed then, and still believes,

"language is how we are going to transform this building." She told her staff in an early letter to them:

I want to be part of a team of educators and parents who create a school that makes kids see possibilities in themselves that they couldn't have imagined, except for us. A place where teachers bubble over with great conversations about their students, their new ideas for projects, books and collaborations, the reading they're doing and the plans they have. A place where teachers surprise themselves with their own growth as professionals, as learners, mentors, and as leaders. A place where parents and grandparents in the neighborhood chat about how well their kids are doing at "F" and rush to get their kids to school early enough to catch every moment of instruction. A place where everyone in the building knows that what they do matters, that the tiniest greetings and exchanges are meaningful and set the tone of expectations of ourselves, the parent community and most of all, our children who count on us so heavily.

The "village it takes to raise a child" is us. I will need everyone to be a member of this vision of a village made up of compassionate, intelligent, child-centered educators and support staff in order to serve our children well. I have accepted this challenging and humbling assignment because I can envision a good future for our students, but I know I can't do this without all of you building the village.

Now that she has been at the school for over six months, Principal F is still grappling with some key issues such as her ambivalence over wanting to be liked or loved as part of a community versus the realization that as the leader, she sometimes has to do things that will not be popular with the staff and/or the parents, for the good of the community. She also finds that she is sometimes at odds with the message from central staff. She states,

A lot of times...the message is rigor...you know...moving instruction ahead - I have often felt- and occasionally said - that is not the bigger issue. The bigger issue is really making sure that I have a happy community of teachers that want to be working with me - that share a vision - that feel loved and I want people to like coming to work - and I am not going to push people beyond the point where I think that they are going to be...where they start to feel that I am stretching them too much - where they are feeling stressed - I mean I want them to feel that they are in some kind of disequilibrium, but I also want them to feel happy to come to work; and like I know what they are really good at doing, so that is a big thing in my mind every minute; how to make people feel supported, cared for and loved, while pushing them to the next step and helping them to see what could have been done.

Principal F thinks that she is making progress. She values her role as a staff developer and finds that more and more teachers come to her asking for help in some instructional area or activity. What makes her happiest is that teachers are comfortable inviting her into their classrooms.

She describes her personal professional development plan as follows:

My own professional development has been nourished, so, far, by being included in a culture of District #2 principals who are a luminous model of a community of learners. Since becoming a principal, I have been included in conversation that have their roots in books about school policy, instruction, and school culture. I read professional publications extensively and belong to NCTE, IRA and NCTM.

My reading of Language Arts, Voices from the Middle, Primary Voices, The Reading Teacher and the Journal of Adult and Adolescent Literacy on a monthly basis give me a rich culture of ideas and practices to think about and share. Currently, I am reading Katie Wood Ray's Wondrous Words.

## **FINDINGS**

In District #2, improving instruction is the shared work and primary responsibility of all principals. As Shelley Harwayne, Deputy Superintendent in District #2, explains in her book *Going Public*: "This is a district that asks principals to get good at teaching." A variety of formal and informal structures communicate this message to new principals during their first year, helping them to shape and focus their work. These structures convey clear expectations as to what principals work should be and provide models, in the form of successful principals, to demonstrate how the expectations can be met. In addition to the distinct subset of expectations specifically directed at them, novice principals also appear to rely heavily upon the broader web of expectations and support in place for all principals. Similar to the process all principals undergo as they internalize their own system's culture, new principals are absorbed into the culture of District #2. In this district, the new principal experience is unique in that it is not the result of a highly-evolved support structure for new principals, but rather, organized around the target of improved instruction.

### **District-Wide Formal Structures**

These structures are best defined as district practices that help clarify the principal's role and provide principals with support to fulfill that role. Several are intended specifically for new principals, but the majority are in place for all. The new principals with whom we spoke found structures specific to their work (e.g. new principal mentoring) variably useful. The structures upon which they relied most, almost unanimously, were those in place for all principals. These structures range from school-based support to district-level activities, and provide the shared experiences and knowledge base from which principals design their own work. The following is a closer look at each of these structures.

#### **Principal Conferences**

Once a month, all District Two principals meet to share and continue their learning in a particular instructional area. These conferences are day-long, and dedicated almost exclusively to instruction, with minimal time at the end of the meeting spent on administrative items. The conferences are sometimes held at a local school, and include focused visits to classrooms to observe a particular practice or strategy in action. District administrators expect principals to transmit the content of these meetings to their staffs at subsequent faculty or grade-level team meetings. Through these monthly conferences, the district establishes clear instructional priorities for principal work; giving principals models of what the instruction should look like and providing principals with tools to help teachers deliver this instruction. According to one new principal, "the principals conferences have enormous effect on me because whatever I learn there I bring back to my staff. I want them to see that I am learning and growing in my job the same way they are learning and growing in theirs."

Other new principals spoke of these conferences as setting an agenda and providing a direction for their work at home in their individual school settings. In the words of one new principal:

Monthly principals' conferences provide the seeds of rich and fertile topics for me as a learner. A good example would be our end of the summer conference (my first) where one of the keynote speakers, Donald Graves, author of *Bring Life into Learning*, inspired me with his ideas on energy replenishing and energy draining work. The combination of reading his book, talking to teachers about my response and creating a conversation at School F as well as the conversations that continue among principals opened a new inquiry for me.

Another principal commented: "When I go to the Principals Conferences I am constantly amazed at the high standards... when I came back from the principals conference on Thursday, a teacher asked 'What are the principals like in D2?' I said, almost every principal could probably provide an answer [to a problem or concern] for me."

### **School-based Staff Developers**

Another district-wide structure focusing on instructional improvement is the school-based staff developer. These individuals are both external consultants providing services to particular schools, and expert classroom teachers released from teaching duties to work with staff. Staff developers focus solely upon improvement of instruction, classroom-by-classroom and grade-by-grade. Since the inception of this model almost ten years-ago, the staff developers have focused on one particular content area at a time. They assume that teachers cannot make significant, sustainable changes to their practice if they are asked to change instruction across numerous content areas at once. Overall, the model stresses:

1. Direct work with individual teachers on concrete problems related to instruction in a given content area
2. Work with grade-level teams of teachers on common problems across their classrooms
3. Consultation with individual teachers who are developing new approaches to teaching in their classroom that might be useful to other teachers
4. Work with larger groups of teachers to familiarize them with the basic ideas behind instructional improvement in a given content area. (Elmore and Burney, 1996)

While the staff developer model evolved from the district-wide need to provide teachers with classroom-based support for instructional change, it also serves to reinforce the principal's role as instructional leader. Through this model, principals have expert, school-based resources that they describe as "purists," focused wholly on improving instruction. If principals were not held accountable for improving instruction, the staff developers could be seen as independent operators, only tangentially connected to the work of the principal. Instead, staff developers in District #2 help to drive the principals' agenda, deepening the principals' understanding of instruction and supporting the instructional vision at the school. One new principal said, "the staff developers have been a tremendous support for me. I did not come into this with the strongest curriculum knowledge; it is good to have them, and very important to me." In this way, the staff developers help to outline and actualize each principals agenda for instructional work, while also providing staff development to those principals.

## **Principal Site Visits**

In addition to support structures that help principals orchestrate their roles as instructional leaders, District #2 has several mechanisms to ensure that schools progress as expected. One to four times a year, Elaine Fink, Shelley Harwayne, and Bea Johnstone visit each school in the district to provide guidance and monitor school progress. These visits have evolved into the following walkthrough model, which focuses principals on the quality of instruction in their building.

According to Bea Johnstone, each walkthrough takes approximately three hours, and begins with a conversation in the principal's office. At that time, district administrators review the staff roster with the principal. They discuss each teacher's progress in implementing literacy instruction. The principal is expected to be able to describe teacher strengths and weaknesses, and to discuss support each teacher receives. Following this discussion, Elaine, Bea, Shelley, the principal and staff developers walk through the school during the literacy block, teacher roster in hand. In each classroom, they are looking at the level of student engagement; whether literacy activities are authentic and meaningful; at the quality and rigor of student work; and at the effectiveness of particular teaching strategies. After the visit, they sit again with the principal to discuss their impressions, typically addressing areas of strength, expectations for next steps, and observations about the principal's leadership. A detailed memorandum of understanding follows the visit.

Although these visits create some level of anxiety for new principals, the visits are primarily viewed as supportive; in fact, new principals found them essential to ongoing improvement in their buildings. During these visits, district administrators make their expectations for principals clear in many ways. First, the conversation is not about paperwork, discipline, or parent involvement: it is about instruction. Second, new principals are aware that they must be thoroughly knowledgeable about the practice of every teacher in their building. This means that, apart from this visit, principals must arrange their schedule so that they are spending several hours each day visiting classrooms. Describing one walkthrough, a principal said, "I sat down with them and told them just what kind of teaching they were going to see, and I said that these are the things we need to work on with this person. I am the first one to say that we have a lot of work to do."

Third, the district and its administrators make it clear that improving or eliminating poor instruction is an urgent priority. In one case, a principal was asked to terminate a new teacher who had not shown any improvement during the year, on the spot. Although she was unwilling to fulfill the request at that moment, the principal acknowledged that she needed to remove the teacher in short order.

Again, the district oversight function is not simply about monitoring; nor does it involve diffuse, vague priorities. The walkthroughs and other district involvement revolves around instructional improvement and the principal's role as instructional leader.

## **Principal study groups**

The principal conferences are the primary formal structure in place for district-wide principal study. However, the district also offers occasional topical study groups that convene as needed. This school year, Shelley Harwayne is convening two study groups: "Running Effective Staff Meetings (What kind of talk and activity promotes improved instruction?)" and, "The Administrator's Role in Writing (Possibilities include looking at student writing in order to establish ambitious goals for students, informing parents about

the teaching of writing, writing teacher observations, and writing for publication)." A new principal said, "My membership in a principal's study group on planning successful staff meetings has led to fruitful conversations about reasonable goals and creative ways to structure meetings so that they empower learning for the entire community." Another stated, "Our new principal support group often refers to Shelley's book as a touchstone text as we discuss our individual struggles to personalize leadership."

Other offerings led by experienced principals and district personnel are "Long-term Planning of Big School-Wide Issues", "Getting the Most Out of your Intervention Practices"(refers to instructional practices such as reading recovery), "New Standards" and, "Student Portfolios (How does their use promote teaching and learning)."

### **Formal structures for New Principals**

In addition to the structures in place to support and monitor the work of all principals, District #2 has implemented several practices specifically designed to help new principals. Interestingly, often new principals' initial requests are for help in managing routine administrative tasks. Because the District so heavily emphasizes instructional improvement, new principals express a need for support on ordinary management issues, ranging from how to complete paperwork and negotiate with an irate parent, to how to address union issues and organize an administrative team. Some of the management work new District Two principals encounter is similar to what you would expect to find in more traditional districts. The difference is that these new principals understand they must find ways to reduce or eliminate the management tasks in order to focus on instruction. In other words, they are all clear that they must focus the majority of their time and attention on instruction; they seek assistance on administrative responsibilities in order to reduce or delegate non-instructional management tasks.

### **New principal support groups**

There are two main support structures in place for new principals: Opportunities to learn from a more experienced colleague (mentor/mentee relationships) and opportunities to share and learn from other new principals, under the guidance of a district administrator. The new principal support group convenes regularly, and has adopted many different formats. Often, the meeting is simply a group of new principals coming together to talk about issues with which they are struggling. One new principal describes these meetings as a chance to "let our hair roll down and talk about all the things that prevent us from being the instructional leaders that we want to be." Another comments on the value of this group:

After you have spent a whole week hardly being able to go up into a classroom because you have been busy putting out fires...so after I have done all this and then you talk...it is very frustrating...because you have done so much to keep the wolves at bay so teaching can go on...and you just have this feeling that no one understands...so it is great being with some of those other people because everyone kind of has their own issues...it is just the feeling that we're in this together, and the best part of this job is the welcoming embracing feeling in the district.

In other instances, there are opportunities to ask for direct support or intervention. One new principal invited Shelley Harwayne to run one of her faculty meetings; the other new principals also attended to observe the meeting. These meetings appear to be the primary outlet for new principals to air administrative and instructional issues, and to receive input from colleagues.

## **Mentors**

The district design for mentoring relationships entails direct support to new principals from effective and seasoned principals, around issues of curriculum and instruction. New principals routinely participate in their mentors' faculty meetings and grade-level team meetings, perform walkthroughs of their mentors' schools, and participate in study groups about specific instructional issues. The program provides working models of principals engaged in the types of activities expected of a District #2 principal. New principals also rely heavily on their mentors for information about routine administrative tasks. "What I really need is.... trivial things... I get these memos and I just want someone to sit with me and say you can throw that out... I need [this type of] technical assistance."

In reflecting on the value of having a mentor, a principal stated, "She plants her feet right into your soul." Another said, "She [my mentor] has been a solid rock...she is even willing to do the dirty work. [She helped me] organize my files."

New principals describe these relationships as variably effective. In every case, new principals respected the knowledge and abilities of their mentor principals, but the relationships that worked best were those in which new principals felt a level of trust and comfort with their mentors. The relationship appeared less effective when mentor principals had inadequate time to spend with their mentees, or when the mentees did not feel confident enough to be honest about difficulties they encountered. In instances where the formal relationship did not provide adequate support, most developed informal mentoring relationships elsewhere in the district.

All of the respondents mentioned key individuals who had encouraged them to pursue their goals, provided support for their decisions, and acted as cheerleaders and mentors, even if they were not officially designated as mentors.

## **Informal Structures**

District #2 doesn't depend on individual projects or programs for improving instruction. Nor does it expressly rely on any prescribed set of programs to develop its new principals. When Tony Alvarado, former Superintendent of District #2, speaks to principal groups in other school districts, he tells them that the principal's job is to focus on improving instruction, but that everything and everyone will try to pull them away from that job. For example, in a district that mandates that new principals work on instruction, but maintains its same practices (inundating them with paperwork, offering few opportunities for rigorous learning about practice, infrequently visiting schools), new principals will soon enough abandon their attempts to improve instruction. According to one former District Two principal, "You train at the core -- not at the periphery."

This is not to imply that District #2 has no specific strategies in place for supporting the work of new principals. Rather, it is to clarify that, to a large degree, the work of training new principals occurs through a district's culture and day-to-day interactions, rather than through even the most thoughtful of support programs. In talking with new principals, it is evident through their expressed priorities, concerns, and ability to talk in detail about instruction, that they have internalized the District #2 culture in ways that even they may not recognize. One principal describes his experience in a university leadership program that drew aspiring leaders from across New York City: "The District #2 people stood out. The things that we were talking about; the things that we valued were so different from what the other people in the program were talking about."

The specific role of the principal in District Two is to ensure a high-quality teacher in every classroom. This happens in four main ways: hiring; supporting (professional development); monitoring and giving feedback; and firing. All other principal work is subordinate to this main task. Principals are still expected to maintain discipline, meet with parents, and get reports completed on time, but these items are rarely discussed in meetings, at supervisory sessions, or among principals. When they are discussed, they are raised in the spirit of getting them out of the way, so that principals can focus on their real work-- improving instruction.

In addition to the formal structures mentioned above, new principals learn about their work through numerous informal channels. These include (but are not limited to) the following:

### **Collegial Networks Focused on Instruction**

It is fairly common for new principals in District #2 to visit one another's schools, and then build time into their days for debriefing and discussion. This is not limited to the mentor/mentee relationships set up for new principals; indeed, those who routinely visit are as likely to visit other colleagues' schools as they are to visit their mentor's school. One new principal stated that she has "no problem calling upon other experts she knows for help in a particular area, and has already done so on many occasions."

All of the principals described their previous experiences as teacher leaders, staff developers or facilitators as being instrumental in preparing them for their present positions. In some cases, they recalled that those previous experiences were frustrating, either because they could not sustain their work long enough to make a difference, or because they were not really a part of the school where they spent two or three days a week. This led them to think that if they became principals, they would be able to effect change, and help to reinforce and sustain change in instructional practice.

Principals cited readings that were influential on their thinking (e.g., Sergiovanni, Harwayne, etc.) However, they said the principals with whom they worked earlier in their careers, as well as formal and informal mentors, whose leadership styles they admired and try to emulate had the most profound influence on their instructional leadership. They all recognized the importance of creating a sense of team or community, and were working hard in the early months of their first principal appointments to foster collegiality in their schools. Most had to overcome obstacles such as residual loyalties to the previous principal or union leadership working to undermine the collegial atmosphere and teamwork the principal was trying to establish. Their strategies included, but were not limited to: retreats, Outward Bound experiences, and choosing people to participate in conferences and seminars and assume positions of leadership in the building.

The most notable characteristics all of the new principals had in common were commitment to their schools, and a tremendous work ethic. None worked fewer than 10-12 hours a day. Most skipped lunch almost every day. This fact was not lost on their staffs. All principals were committed to being in classrooms for part of every day, and resented the interruptions that kept them from spending more time on instruction.

Clearly, the district's message that instructional leadership is the school principal's primary role has hit home with these six novice principals, and they are fairly successful at putting the theory into practice.

## **Some Preliminary Observations about Recruitment and Induction**

During the initial observations of these six new principals, we began to discern the outlines of a theory of action around recruitment and induction. At the basis of this theory is an assumption similar to that underlying our earlier paper on school variability and systemic improvement: That all important strategic issues in large-scale instructional improvement are essentially problems of adjusting the general to the particular. In the context of the earlier paper, our argument was that systemic improvement works in District #2 because district administrators are able to adjust their overall expectations for high quality instruction and high student performance to the reality that the specific characteristics of schools and their communities vary markedly. This strategy of adjustment occurs through bilateral negotiations between district administrators and principals around the specific requirements of the district's overall strategy placed in the context of a particular school.

Similarly, one can think about principal recruitment and induction as a process of fitting the district's requirements for instructional leadership -- part of its overall strategy of instructional improvement -- to the particularities of the school, its community and the distinct talents and personal characteristics of the individual principal. Recruitment is, from the district's perspective, a matter of finding and growing a pool of talent for instructional leadership and then attempting to match the characteristics of the individual with the demands of a particular school. From the new principal's perspective, recruitment is a process of deciding, first, whether to enter the principalship, and second, whether a particular school is a good fit with his or her aspirations and talents. Induction, from the district's perspective, is a matter of using the professional development and management tools at its disposal to tailor its support for principals to the particular adjustment problems presented by a particular school. From the new principal's perspective, induction is a matter of finding the support needed to adjust to the particular demands of a new job in a new environment.

One sees, in the initial portraits of new principals, evidence of the district's strategy of recruitment and induction. The new principals vary considerably in their backgrounds, experience, and age; there is clearly no simple, standard career track toward the principalship in District #2. What all the new principals have in common, though, is that in the judgment of district administrators, they are ready, at some basic level, to carry the district's agenda of instructional improvement in their particular schools. Their personal professional development plans closely match the system-wide expectations for principals-as-learners: Each speaks to an individual agenda of reading and intellectual growth; each speaks to interaction with other principals around issues of instructional improvement; and each speaks of the nature of the mentor relationship. So too do they speak of the district goals for literacy and mathematics, followed by other subjects and a concern for the special needs of students. So the imprint of the district's overall strategy of improvement is clear in the details of the individual principals' stories of the initial experience.

Yet, in each of these narratives, principals also focus on the particulars of their new roles and schools. They speak of the legacy of their predecessors, some strong in the eyes of their communities, and some weak. They speak of the special circumstances of faculty and staff in their schools; the number of new teachers; the composition of the experienced teaching force; prior history of relations with the teachers' union. They speak of the particularities of their communities, approval or disapproval, factionalism or unity on the part of parents about their predecessors and themselves. And they speak of the problems of adapting the district's general expectations for engagement of teachers in professional

development and improvement of student performance to the particular population of teachers and students in their schools.

In addition, the narratives contain evidence about the specific characteristics of the individuals who are entering the principalship. Their backgrounds vary widely, as does the relevance of their prior experience to the immediate demands of their current work. Each is constructing an entry strategy, derived from the particularities of the schools they are entering. Some focus first on structure -- changing grade configurations and their physical location, for example -- while others focus first on the problems raised by particular groups of teachers; new teachers, incompetent or burnt-out teachers, resistant teachers, for example. And each has specific expectations for him-or herself, derived in part from personal experience and philosophies and in part from values and beliefs. So the individuals put their own stamp on the principalship.

A theory of action around recruitment and induction, then, would put these three Domains - - the system, the school and its community, and the individual -- in an interactive relationship with each other. The "success" of recruitment and induction (measured in terms of a principal who is successful in the system's, the school's and community's, and the individual's expectations) depends on a complex process of "fitting" these three domains together on a case-by-case basis, school-by-school and principal-by-principal. This process of fitting occurs around the system's expectations for the role of the principal -- more specific in District #2 than in most school districts -- and around the particular demands of an individual school and the experiences, beliefs, and values of the individuals.

In our next round of work, we will focus more deeply on mapping these three domains and how they relate to each other in recruitment and induction. Central to this work will be attention to the "connective tissue" of the district's professional development and supervisory activities, which serve as the medium through which the three domains are connected: Mentoring, peer interaction, principals' conference, and annual evaluation and priority-setting. In addition to the individuals' experience in their jobs during the first year, we will examine the nature of their interactions with their mentors, their peers, and their district supervisors, with special attention to the ways in which the system, the school and its community, and the individual relate to each other in shaping the principal's role.

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