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Coaching As A Capacity Building Strategy for School Leaders

Author: Dr. Denese Belcehtz

Increasingly, school leaders are appointed to positions of school leadership with fewer years of experience in the classroom. To support these newly appointed leaders and build their capacity to lead in these changing times, coaching is one strategy being implemented for all school leaders in the York Regions District School Board. Coaching is a non-evaluative process that supports reflective and reciprocal dialogue about the individual's practice as a leader. A coach uses skilled questioning and interactive strategies to encourage and support dialogue about the issues under discussion. In this approach, the structured interchange becomes the springboard to providing new insights and awareness.

Keywords: coaching, reflective dialogue, leadership, capacity building **Leadership and Innovation in the York Region District School Board**

Author: Dr. Denese Belchetz

With its vision of a sustained focus on improving student achievement and wellbeing for each student, the York Region District School Board recognizes the key impact that strong leadership has in this process. Grounded firmly in the Province of Ontario's education strategy, the board has adopted a coherent and aligned research based approach to fostering school and system leadership in support of the evolving roles and responsibilities of its school and system

leaders.

This paper outlines the provincial context and addresses the leadership development approach that the York Region District Board has taken to date in support of its school leaders. Recognizing that each school has its own specific context, the approach is one that establishes a framework of system understandings, resources and supports within which schools and school leaders – teachers, managers and school administrators – can do their work.

Keywords: student achievement, student well-being, school leadership, system leadership, sustaining improvement strategies, second order change, networked learning, learning communities, capacity building, school effectiveness framework

Aligning Goals to Maximize Students' Success

Author: Sayeda Datoo

In this paper, I will argue that York Region District School Board (YRDSB) has achieved immense results in the area of student achievement (literacy) largely due to three factors. The three factors, in no particular order of importance, are (a) the district literacy goals align closely with the provincial goals, (b) the district focus on the Literacy Collaborative and (c) the leadership and change facilitation strategy of 'pressure and support'. I will be drawing my conclusions by closely examining 20 YRDSB schools. Data on these 20 schools has come from anecdotal notes from the Literacy Fair (explained below) and the one-page school template description published in Welcome to the Literacy Learning Fair...an opportunity to share, reflect and celebrate! (2007). I will end by emphasizing that when the district closely meshes its goals with the ministry, provides job embedded professional development to its staff, and applies 'pressure and support' to the individual schools, then vast and immense results for student success are possible.

Keywords: literacy collaborative, literacy, alignment of goals, literacy, student achievement, action research, professional learning, professional learning communities, change management **Critical Knowledge Building**

Author: Dr. Debbie Donsky

The study will review how a critical knowledge building (Donsky, 2006) environment is created and sustained by taking into consideration several factors: (1) how mandated curriculum influences the implementation of critical knowledge building and student engagement by limiting the value of indigenous knowledges and establishing cultural capital within the classroom (2) the dialogue and patterns of participation within this space; and (3) whose knowledge is valued and whose is silenced. The qualitative research methodology (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000) used in this study was critical action research (Noffke, 1995). Data was collected from a Knowledge Forum® (Scardamalia and Bereiter, 1994) database, classroom observations of in-class discussions with the students and teacher, focus group discussions and email. In addition, an analysis of the revisions within the Ontario Social Studies curriculum documents from 1998 and 2004 to understand the way in which both explicit and hidden curricula are mandated provincially. Within this Critical Knowledge Building classroom, curriculum extended beyond a particular grade level, students found opportunities to bring forth indigenous knowledges as a way to connect with curriculum, and the perception and experience of dialogue in the classroom shifted.

Keywords: knowledge building, critical pedagogy, social studies, indigenous knowledge, cultural capital **Teacher Stories, Principal Vision and the One Hundredth Monkey: Quantum Change in School Improvement**

Author: Corey Jackson

Shift the lens accordingly from the cause of the environment to that of the realm of public school improvement. It is not the stark life-or-death cause inherent in our planet's health, although the pressing need to provide the best education possible to our world's children is universally acknowledged. In Ontario, and elsewhere, the desire to educate our children more effectively is resulting in major efforts to overhaul the way in which our public schools operate. Current efforts appear at times to be ineffectual and faltering. How can the current inspirational Earth Hour commitment be replicated through the imagination and hard work of our educators, to turn that little "bit of snow that gathers momentum" into the same Earth Hour type of phenomenon that will create a public education breakthrough change?

Keywords: school improvement, personal values, school leadership, distributed leadership, collaboration, building relationships, relational trust, dialogue, reflection

Learning Networks for First-time Vice-principals: A Process of Socialization to a New Role in the Ontario Context of Educational Leadership

Author: Richard Williamson

The issue of educational leadership has a long and tumultuous history (Donmoyer, 1998; Mitchell & Ortiz, 2006; Greenfield, 1978; Hoy & Miskel, 1982; Ryan, 1999; Bates, 1980). For over a century policy-makers, scholars and practitioners have grappled with issues and constructs of leadership (Donmoyer, 1998; Mitchell and Ortiz, 2006; Greenfield, 1978; Hoy & Miskel, 1982). In the opening years of the twenty-first century the discussion has gone global. The worldwide exchange of ideas and practices is now a routine phenomenon as key stakeholders seek an understanding of what good school leadership is and what its purposes are. The Ministry of Education for the province of Ontario has added its perspectives to this discussion. This took place when the Ministry introduced The Ontario Leadership Strategy (OLS) in

2006

(<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/leadership/framework.html>). The Strategy is comprised of a four-point action plan. The components of the plan are: a Common Provincial Framework, leadership development activities that are aligned with the Framework, support mechanisms for school leaders, and an Institute for Education Leadership.

Keywords: educational leadership, Ontario Leadership Framework, leadership competencies
Teacher Leadership: A Lever for Shaping School Capacity

Author: Kathy Witherow

The demands on schools have increasingly become more complex in the context of accountability. School reform is on the agenda in many countries throughout the world (Barber & Mourshed, 2007, Fullan, 2008) with the belief that improvement can only be achieved if the entire school and system take responsibility for student learning and collaborative teacher learning. School reforms have not had a long history of success as there tends to be the problem of 'initiativitis' according to Fullan (2008). The symptoms of initiativitis are the unrelenting launch of disconnected programs and initiatives. Add to this the lack of involvement of teachers in the proposed changes and you have a recipe for failure. Stoll and Fink (1996) believe 'that these attempts have failed in the past and will fail in the future because teachers have not been involved in the changes and find little personal meaning in them' (p. 6). To correct this pattern, Elmore (2004) suggests that 'improvement is more a function of learning to do the right things in the settings where you work than it is of what you know when you start to do the work' (p. 73). Elmore goes on to say that the problem lies in the fact that there is:

...almost no opportunity for teachers to engage in continuous and sustained learning about their practice in the setting in

which they actually work, observing and being observed by their colleagues in their own classrooms and in the classrooms of other teachers in other schools confronting similar problems of practice. (p. 127)

If teaching and learning are to be the focus of well-planned, connected reform initiatives and if teachers are to be an integral part of the changes called for, then the relationship between teacher leadership and school capacity for change is an issue that requires investigating.

Keywords: Teacher leadership, collaboration, school improvement, distributed leadership **First and Second Order Change in Education and Its Implications for Future Directions**

Author: Peter Zsebik

A new form of dialogue has begun to appear within education – a dialogue that may break the current cyclical nature of playing catch-up to society with which education has found itself entwined (see Zsebik, 2003). It centers on the notion of first order and second order change, a theory that has recently come to light in education that may provide a dialectic for exploring new possible answers to problems that perennially resurface within the educational framework. If it proves systemically beneficial, it may also encourage a lasting transformation to both current and future educational processes that in turn may help to establish a new paradigm for leadership in education.

Keywords: transformative, teacher leadership, collaboration