

Project Success

Close the Gap Consortium: Leadership News

April 2005

Outreach and Leadership

A wise middle school principal once said that she was the school’s head cheerleader. It was difficult to grasp what she meant. Did she line up with the cheerleading squad at games? Did she lead the faculty in Walmart-like Monday morning spirit rallies? Was she a regular on the local civic club circuit, delivering the after-lunch or after-breakfast 10-minute summary about student accomplishments and community service projects? After taking her place, it became more apparent that what she meant included all these things...and more.

McRel’s research defines “outreach” as “The extent to which the principal is an advocate and spokesperson for the school to all stakeholders.”

- Assures that the school is in compliance with district and state mandates
- Advocates on behalf of the school in the community
- Advocates for the school with parents of the students
- Ensures that the central office is aware of the school’s accomplishments

Not exactly the kind of responsibility that brings about deep change, but very, very necessary. Compliance assurances can run from fire and safety codes to numerous policies to student assessment and curriculum. All are important and require attention. As an

advocate, a leader becomes assertive in representing the school clearly and accurately, honestly and with loyalty. Outreaching within the district to the central office allows for support of the school based on a regular flow of information.

The outreach responsibility, according to McRel, does not produce organizational change; however, it’s absence may prevent the school’s leadership from moving forward.

So, the cheerleading parallel is a good one. Highly visible? Yes. Working in unison with others? Absolutely. Recognizing accomplishments of others? Definitely.

Order and Leadership

“When organizations are in a crisis, they have to be rescued from chaos.” (Michael Fullan) We may not want to think of the places in which we work as being in “chaos,” but in terms of student achievement, the leadership responsibility for bringing about order is very much in need. McRel’s research specifies three practices for the principal:

- Provide and reinforce clear structures, rules and procedures for students
- Provide and enforce

clear structures, rules and procedures for staff

- Establish routines regarding the running of the school that staff understand and follow

Teachers prefer to work in schools that are orderly. Students prefer to work in schools that are orderly. In a review of all the books on leadership sitting on my bookshelf—from Roland Barth to Jim Collins to Peter Drucker to Michael Fullan to Ron Heifetz and on and on, there are few references to a leader’s responsibility

for bringing order to the organization.

“This is about getting all your ducks in a row,” said one seasoned superintendent. “You have to have order BEFORE you can do anything else.”

McRel calls it, “establishing a set of standard operating procedures and routines.” In the military, SOP (standard operating procedures) are so clear and well-thought that there is almost no chance for misunderstanding.

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Hickman Mills Mentors

- **Bob Henley is mentor to Ervin and Smith-Hale Middle Schools**
- **Russ Pieken is mentor to Hickman Mills High School**
- **Harold Frye is mentor to Ruskin High School**

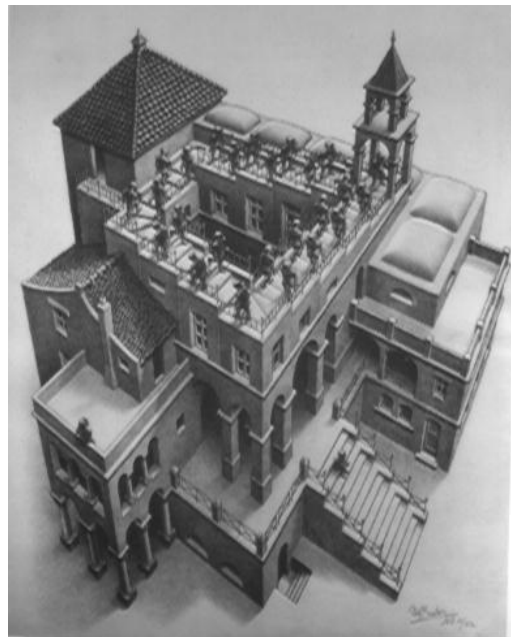
Order (continued)

Order and routine become so integrated into the on-going, everyday fabric of the school's life that all can anticipate what comes next. Routines allow people to focus on the critical work of teaching and learning. Artist M.C. Escher describes what can happen when order and routine become the primary focus. In his rendering, *Ascending and Descending*, nameless, faceless individuals circle round and round, following the same routine. In true Escher fashion, their paths seem to be going somewhere when, in fact, they are going nowhere. That's not the kind of order and routine we're willing to support. Ours is basic, common sense, preventative, well-communicated, simple, uncompli-

cated, service-driven, responsive, and humane. Routines are thought out well in advance and do not surprise anyone. They lead people to be able to carry them out to the point Benjamin Bloom called "automaticity."

Throughout previous newsletters, your writers have stressed the importance of "shared leadership." When it comes to order, the principal may be able to share the responsibility for carrying out a particular routine, but can never shift responsibility for initiating, monitoring, and making appropriate adjustments. Order is just too important.

At right, M.C. Escher *Ascending and Descending* from Cordon Art-Baarn-The Netherlands



Distributed leadership lets "the group capitalize on individual strengths to create a common approach to improvement."

McRel

Note:

Issues of this newsletter and the first four issues are now available on the website for the Kansas City Regional Professional Development Center at www.umkc.edu/education/kcrpdc/ Look for "Close the Gap"

Progress

- Five Ruskin teachers and one Smith-Hale teacher recently attended a workshop presented by Dr. Pedro Noguero, author of *City Schools and the American Dream*. Dr. Noguera works with urban high schools and teaches at New York University. He has also taught at Harvard and Berkeley.
- Consortium schools are hosting visits by their McRel staff during April. Howard Pitler visited Ervin and Smith-Hale Middle Schools and Hickman Mills High School in early April and Greg Cameron visited Ruskin High School later in the month. The purpose of the visits was to allow McRel staff opportunities to see progress being made and to answer questions about future work from each of the schools' leadership teams.
- Final training dates for leadership teams from each Consortium school are scheduled for April in Columbia. Attention will be given to extending the work of teaching content vocabulary and connecting vocabulary with improvements in reading and writing.
- Congratulations to Ruskin High School as they have been designated an A+ high school in Missouri.
- We've heard that Dr. Kent King, Missouri Commissioner of Education, has granted placing a "hold" on results for Hickman Mills District's recent accreditation review to allow work being done in the "Close the Gap" Consortium to prove results. What a great incentive!