



Project Success

Close the Gap Consortium: Leadership News

February 2005

The Balcony View—Bob Henley

Our McRel colleagues often speak of the “balcony view.” Ron Heifetz in *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Chapter 11) refers to getting the “balcony view” as part of a system not only as a way to get a better view of what’s going on, but also to reduce administrative stress. Dr. Heifetz is a psychiatrist as well as an author on school administration.

An example is the experience of dancing on a dance floor in contrast to standing on a balcony and watching other people dance. Obviously, while dancing it is hard to get a sense of the patterns made

by everyone on the floor. A view from the balcony allows one to see who is dancing, with whom, and with what groups. One can also see who is sitting out the dance. The relevance to school administration is obvious.

In the same chapter, Heifetz suggests other techniques to reduce personal stress and to get a more objective view of what is going on in the school.

1. Get the balcony view
2. Distinguish self from role (very important)

3. Externalize the conflict
4. Use partners
5. Listen (using one’s self as data)
6. Find a sanctuary
7. Preserve a sense of purpose

These ideas are discussed in detail in Chapter 11 and are recommended reading by your Hickman Mills mentors for review and consideration by each school’s leadership team.

This is the third edition of *Leadership News*. As mentors to each school’s leadership team, we hope that the information has been helpful and has caused reflection, both individually and collaboratively. The work has just started and much lies ahead. If we meet our challenges, we will erase the gaps in achievement that cause our children to be denied the opportunities they deserve. We are excited at the enthusiastic responses we have seen from teachers and administrators.

Resources and Leadership—Harold Frye

How are the concepts of leadership and resources linked? The Gallup Organization conducted a meta-analysis of a number of studies that investigated why employees stay or leave their jobs. The study revealed twelve questions to which going or staying could be attributed. In addition to identifying the twelve questions, the Gallup study also found that the twelve questions were arranged in a hierarchy similar to that of Maslow’s pyramid of human needs. In the Gallup study,

the basic question at the lowest part of the pyramid was “Do I have the materials and equipment I need to do my job?” At the top of the pyramid was the question, “Have I had opportunities to learn and grow in my work in the past year?”

The Gallup findings parallel those of McRel’s Tim Waters, Brian McNulty, and Bob Marzano who found that Resources do in fact have a positive impact on student achievement. McRel’s definition of Resources:

- “Ensures that teachers have necessary materials and equipment
- Ensures that teachers have necessary staff development opportunities that directly enhance their teaching”

The McRel research adds one critical factor. To be effective in raising student achievement levels, the leadership needed to provide necessary resources comes from leadership that is shared.

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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**

Resources (continued)

Hickman Mills schools possess a head start on shared leadership through the responsibility taken by professional development committees. Exit interviews of departing teachers indicate that materials and equipment are always a challenge, but not a significant problem.

One final look at the business of leadership and resources comes from Harry Wong's article in the January 2005 *Phi*

Delta Kappan. Wong describes new teacher induction programs in five countries, comparing those practices with general practices in American schools. Among other needs, Wong notes that the most successful induction programs "go beyond mentoring...they are structured, sustained, intensive professional development programs that allow new teachers to observe others, to be observed by oth-

ers, and to be a part of networks or study groups." As resources go, support for new teachers that leads to ongoing career-long development may well be the greatest resource of all. The history of practices in Hickman Mills gives promise to uses of this resource and the shared leadership that supports it.

Teachers Learn About Content Vocabulary

Jane Doty, McRel staff member, presented a January 26 workshop on content vocabulary to teachers from the four Hickman Mills Project Success schools. The workshop was made possible through funding from the Greater Kansas City Foundations and Trusts. Approximately 40 teachers representing a cross-section of

disciplines were able to deepen their understanding of the process of teaching content vocabulary. Leadership team members from the four schools joined the group for the afternoon session. Jane's "take" on the day? "Hickman Mills teachers are awesome!"

Principals and mentors are looking at ways that continuing training can be provided, including extending work on vocabulary downward into the elementary schools. Some have already requested access to the basic vocabulary word lists.

"Leadership is accomplishing together what individuals cannot accomplish alone."

McRel

Celebrations

- Ruskin reports that enrollment in dual credit upper level math courses went from 13 last year to 76 this year.
- The word is getting around—elementary teachers have reportedly requested access to McRel vocabulary lists
- Leadership team members from the four Project Success schools attended a workshop presented by Dr. Garrett Duncan, St. Louis University. The workshop examined issues surrounding learning hurdles for African-American males. The workshop was made possible by the Greater KC Professional Development Center.
- Ervin science faculty have taken their vocabulary lists a step farther. Using the science standards and grade level expectations as a framework, they categorized their vocabulary lists by grade and by standard. Principal Barb Deane praises teachers' work and their grasp of the process.
- Smith-Hale principal Jan Davis is very pleased at the enthusiasm her teachers have demonstrated for the work on content vocabulary. She believes the school is well on its way toward making strides in teaching vocabulary to the middle school students.