



Project Success

Close the Gap Consortium: Leadership News

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Intellectual Stimulation and Leadership—Harold Frye

Stimulate the intellect? In schools? That’s likely what the “Intellectual Stimulation” responsibility for leadership is all about. The study by McRel’s Tim Waters, Brian McNulty, and Robert Marzano found one of the highest effect sizes on student learning. Adult learning isn’t a new concept in Hickman Mills schools, but how gratifying to have solid statistical support for it, especially data that link the concept to student learning.

Other familiar research voices such as Rick DuFour and his ideas about learning communities and Peter Senge and his concept of learning organizations are now joined by the McRel study. Noel Tichy writes in *The Cycles of Leadership: How Great Leaders Teach Their Companies to Win, 2002*, “teaching is the most effective means through which a leader can lead.” So that’s what leaders must do: stimulate the intellectual dialogue around thoughts,

ideas, models, examples, and all else directly related to student work. The idea of balanced leadership found in the McRel study broadens responsibility for intellectual stimulation much further. And in doing so, it once again reinforces practices already in place in Hickman Mills schools where teacher leaders plan, carry out, and evaluate professional development.

The McRel study specifies clear and direct intent for leaders’ work at intellectual stimulation:

- “Keeps informed about current research and theory regarding effective schooling
- Continually exposes staff to cutting edge ideas about how to be effective
- Systematically engages staff in

discussions about current research and theory

- Continuously involves the staff in reading articles and books about effective practices” (School Leadership That Works, McRel 2004)

Another interesting connection comes from research by The Gallup Organization, noting that those who regularly share books, articles, and professional conversation with colleagues on a regular basis tend to rank high in their intrigue about ideas and activities applicable to the classroom, work to create new techniques, and share them with others. When those intellectual activities are stimulated by leaders, change occurs, the kind of change that results in higher student performance.

Culture and Leadership—Russ Pieken

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**

Culture: Promoting cooperation, cohesion, sense of well-being; developing shared understanding of purpose and a shared vision of what the school could be like (Waters, McNulty, and Marzano. McRel, 2004).

A school’s culture, according to the McRel research, can have a ma-

ajor impact on student achievement when attended to by the school’s leadership. Terrence Deal and Kent Peterson (*Shaping School Culture*) describe a school’s culture in four parts:

- Vision and Value – the myths and stories, mission and purpose, and a school’s definitions

of success

- Ritual and Ceremony – traditional events and formal ceremonies
- History and Stories – a school’s heroes, heroines, and villains and the stories that are told and retold

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Culture (continued)

- Architecture and Artifacts—the school’s environment, its historical collections, and the school’s name.

Deal and Peterson delve deeper into a school’s culture by describing leaders as logos. Culture is affected by leaders’ actions, interactions, intellectual engagement, communicating, sharing, even by joy, laugh-

ter and fun. In applying the McRel concept of distributed leadership, factors which Deal and Peterson purport to be a part of culture extend beyond just the principal or the leadership team but to literally every adult in the school..

Some bemoan that a school’s culture seems to remain the same

without regard to the attrition of individuals moving through the system. Change likely does not occur when culture is not addressed through shared leadership. If you can identify one culture change that has occurred in your school, you will also be able to trace the change through a process in which shared leadership was present.

Star in THE STAR

Smith-Hale teacher Cristin Blunt was pictured in a front-page KC Star article highlighting the work taking place in the district and in other Missouri schools around the Close the Gap Consortium. Information about her work with her

students led readers deeper into the project that focuses on teaching vocabulary to students so that they can be more successful. A challenge even greater than raising achievement levels was posed in the article by Howard Jones, coordinator of

Missouri’s Project Success who noted this work may “show the way” beyond the doors of the district’s classrooms, spreading to the state and, perhaps, to the nation. That’s a tall order, but not one that is impossible.

“Distributed Leadership is a collaborative action that educators engage in when responsible for achieving goals, regardless of their positional or organizational authority”
McRel

Indicators of Progress at Ruskin High School—Jim Tinsley

- Joan Hinkebein, Ruskin High School A+ Coordinator/Instructional Facilitator/Leadership Team member notes that Ruskin teachers have requested 5000 index cards and hundreds of rings to use with their content vocabulary work.
- Action plans by Ruskin teachers Terri Redden and Deb Sturgis have been used as models for other faculty members for uses of vocabulary teaching strategies.
- Ruskin teachers are confident enough in their uses of the Frayer Model that the strategy is left in substitute lesson plans and followed successfully because students are, by now, very familiar with it.