



# Project Success

## Close the Gap Consortium: Leadership News

March 2005

### Situational Awareness and Leadership—Harold Frye

Author Ellen Langer, in her book, *The Power of Mindful Learning*, describes states of mind in which most of us often-times find ourselves. At times, we are fully engaged, taking in new information and processing the information for appropriate action. At other times, stimuli around us don't seem to register as we lapse into what Langer describes as "mindlessness." Optimum performance, regardless of the activity, produces greater results when we are mindful.

Research by McRel authors Tim Waters, Brian McNulty, and Bob Marzano, find that leaders who are situationally aware can bring others to higher levels of achievement. They describe leaders with this awareness who:

- Are aware of informational groups and relationships among staff of the school
- Are aware of issues in the school that have not surfaced but could create discord
- Can predict what could go wrong from day to day

Leaders in schools, whether administrators, members of the leadership team, department or informal leaders, rarely go through their days in a mindless state, unaware of the situations around them. The demands of teaching, planning, and interacting with others prevents most from slipping into mindlessness; however, to meet the expectations described

above move beyond mindfulness in the present. There is suggestion that relationships are vital and that issues and events not occurring yet are also important. The second and third points focus on prevention and seem to depend heavily on the first point.

The Close the Gap Consortium initiative embraces the concept of distributed leadership. To make gains in student achievement through the leadership responsibilities addressed in these newsletters, situational awareness can be effective best when the school's administrators, leadership team, and literally everyone else takes part in the tasks at hand. Langer would call that mindfulness.

#### 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**

### Affirmation and Leadership—Russ Pieken

Author Martin Seligman, in his book, *Authentic Happiness*, defines the idea of affirmation as focusing on human strength as well as weakness, an interest in resilience as well as vulnerability, and a concern with cultivating wellness as well as remediating ills. As human beings, we seem to strive for power, control, acceptance, recognition, and validation. Many psychologists refer to these as basic human emotional needs. These are needs that must be met at some level for optimal personal contributions and the

quest for personal growth and development.

The idea of acceptance, according to psychologist and author Dr. Jerry Wyckoff, comes from showing through actions that a person is accepted regardless of behavior, and behavior can be changed. The unconditional acceptance of the person is essential in the development of resilience and a sense of emotional safety and well-being, while a focus on changing behavior affirms optimism and hope.

Recognition is what we seek

as a part of our need to be included in the larger group. Research by McRel notes that first and foremost all learners ask these two questions:

1. Will I be accepted by the group?
2. Will I be able to do the work?

It would appear that recognition must be based on one's resume or personal accomplishments and cannot be doled out through meaningless programs and

(continued on back)

## New Century Pedagogies and Successful Urban Schools

Administrators and leadership team members from Hickman Mills and Grandview Consortium schools were guests recently of the Kansas City Regional Professional Development Center’s sponsorship of Dr. Garrett Duncan, Washington University in St. Louis. Dr. Duncan focused his presentation on what he termed “Old Century” notions that were based on post-Civil War beliefs about the purposes of educating ex-slaves. Those purposes often competed with one another, whether education should be for liberation or for subordination. He provided workshop participants a picture of what has taken place since

the *Brown v. Board* decision in 1954, the Civil Rights movement, and current effects on education of globalization. Of great interest was the fact that 2.5 million people are currently incarcerated in prisons and jails, more between 1980 and 1995 than in all the previous years combined. He also noted that 80% of current inmates are serving for non-violent offenses, representing \$9B in property loss for such “street” crimes. At the same time, “white collar” crime amounts to \$500B in property loss that isn’t proportionately represented by the inmate population. He also cautioned that pro-

posed federal cuts will translate to fewer teachers, resources, and after-school and summer programs for the No Child Left Behind and Title I programs.

Dr. Duncan spent considerable time in the presentation looking at positives about today’s education and implications for professional development, especially in clarifying issues of race, culture, and power and curriculum and instruction for the post-industrial society. Most importantly, perhaps, Duncan noted the need for teachers to “plan for high rates of student success.”

### Affirmation (continued)

verbage. Helping teachers and students achieve what they can and celebrating the hard work that achievement represents is the only way to build recognition.

Finally, validation comes through valuing the contributions of another person. Listening and affirming

ideas, thoughts, and strengths does just that. Criticism devalues because it tells only what was done that was wrong, focuses on the past, and doesn’t offer hope for the future.

While research findings indicate that the increase in leadership ability as it re-

lates to the skill of affirmation can translate to higher student achievement, it can also go a long way to promote a more gentle, humane, and caring world for all of us who call this planet our home.

**When educators are involved in distributed leadership, “over time, they increase their capacity to do the right work.”**  
**McRel**

### Progress toward Student Achievement

- Ruskin teachers reviewed the Frayer Model, Concept Mapping, and an overview of instructional strategies that work at their February 18 staff development meetings. Leadership Team member LaTosha McKelvy facilitated the conversation.
- Ruskin mentor Harold Frye recently participated in an effort by Kansas Association of School Boards, Kansas State Department of Education, McRel, and administrators from across the state in formulating a plan to address leadership. Harold, representing Baker University, was able to capitalize on experiences already gained in the Missouri “Close the Gap” Consortium, hoping to stimulate bi-state learning opportunities.