

NEWSLETTER

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"Better Schools for Maine Students"

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President's Message

Dear Colleagues,

Spring is finally here! It's beginning to look like we've made it through another Maine winter. The grass is greening and flowers are starting to bloom. Anais Nin reminds us that, *"There came a time when the risk to remain tight in the bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom."* It looks like this is the time for education in Maine to risk blossoming.



After sitting in a legislative hearing in Augusta for LD 579 – Standards-Based Diploma Repeal, I was struck by the need for courage in the face of the fear being expressed about the move to proficiency. It was disconcerting to hear advocates of repealing the standards-based diploma share the "anticipated horrors" associated with educating students to proficiency. I was also struck by how few current public educators were there to speak about their work.

As our testimony that afternoon expressed, "Proficiency-based education refers to any system of academic instruction, assessment, grading and reporting that is based on students demonstrating mastery of the knowledge and skills they are expected to learn before they progress to the next level of learning or receive a diploma." It seems when we pare this initiative back to its most simple definition there's not much to argue about. But, the national standards repeal movement and a lack of faith in a system of proficiency in all eight areas, continues to drive the testimony before the Legislature.

Shortly, the Education Committee will act on a number of bills related to weakening or eliminating components of Proficiency-based Education. Many of those bills are attempts to tweak the changes that we are currently working with, and some completely change the direction. As often happens in education we aren't being given the time and resources to work our way through a thorough change process.

Please contact your local legislator and share your thoughts regarding the path forward. What components are needed to strengthen our work and what will set us back or impact the consistency, continuity and stability we're striving to achieve? Let's encourage our legislators to maintain courage in the face of the fears and recognize that the risk of staying in our bud is more painful than the risk of allowing educational change to bloom in public education.

Sincerely,

Suzanne

Harvard's Bet on Redefining Leadership Development

Last October, 23 leading executives from all sectors of American education gathered at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Each had mentored or supervised a third-year student in the fledgling Doctor in Education Leadership program during a 10-month residency when each student managed a high-priority project in the field.

As a faculty facilitator, I wanted them to answer some fundamental questions as they looked back at the doctoral program's first four years: If the goal was to contribute to the collective transformation of American K-12 education, what leadership competencies should we be developing? What would that require in the trenches? And how might we accomplish that in partnership with those in the room?

At the end of an hour when I summarized the conversation, the group exploded spontaneously in laughter. The complex challenges of improving K-12 education were so unmistakable: The politicization of school reform; the growth of competition in former school district monopolies with the expansion of charters and policies of choice; the labor wars; the continuing instability of governance and the necessary high bar of educating students in struggling communities; the scarce resources and fragmented civic institutions; and the racial and class divides. ... all jumped out in the discussion.

Wide-Ranging Competencies

What this signaled, the executives concluded, was an urgent demand for leaders with an extraordinary range of competencies — from the ability to lead change to navigating politics, from managing scarce and contested financial resources to developing human resources, from understanding and managing evidence to leading for deeper and differentiated learnings the ability to sustain themselves as leaders to ensure lasting change. Every participant also agreed: Resilience and grit mattered tremendously.

That moment crystalized for me the challenge and the potential in the Doctor in Education Leadership Program, which began in 2010 with a cohort of 25 students and replaced Harvard's Urban Superintendents Program. The new program embraced simultaneously the challenge of training leaders to improve existing school systems, where most of the neediest students remain, with the need to innovate and transform K-12 settings across the country. This suggested the need for different competencies and skills for both existing and new organizations.

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MSSA Mission Statement

The Maine School Superintendents Association (MSSA) is an organization that is committed to leadership:

- *Leadership to provide equity, create opportunities for and promote the success of every student;*
- *Leadership to develop ethical, visionary and competent leaders by*
 - *Offering professional learning opportunities for leaders*
 - *Promoting community and legislative support for education*
 - *Providing member services*

Thoughts for the Day...

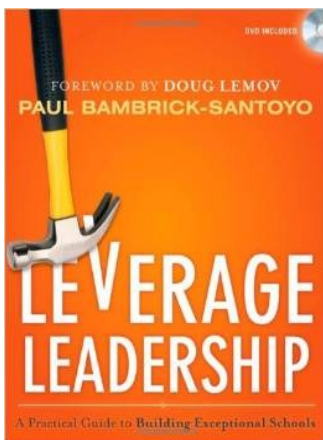
Mistakes are stepping stones to success.

~Charles E. Popplestone

On Our Bookshelf...

[Leverage Leadership](#)

By Paul Bambrick-Santoyo



Paul Bambrick-Santoyo (Managing Director of Uncommon Schools) shows leaders how they can raise their schools to greatness by following a core set of principles. These seven principles, or "levers," allow for consistent, transformational, and replicable growth. With intentional focus on these areas, leaders will leverage much more learning from the same amount of time investment. Fundamentally, each of these seven levers answers the core questions of school leadership:

What should an effective leader do, and how and when should they do it.

Harvard's Bet

(continued from page 1)

The result is that Harvard has built a practice-based doctorate program to prepare students to be system-level leaders in high-need settings, whether urban or rural. Its aim is to develop leaders across sectors, not simply school districts.

Practical and Relevant

Most doctoral students who enter the program have about 10 years of work experience, and many have graduate degrees and leadership experience in districts and classrooms. Others arrive with experiences in nonprofits, philanthropy, government and the private sector.

What gives cohorts distinction is the students' ability for analysis and integration while working within a diverse cohort. It is an intense cohort experience in which one has to wrestle with one's views alongside others' perspectives as well as master the content and analytic training across multiple disciplines, especially those outside education. Assumptions are challenged.

Developing this aggregate talent means constantly revisiting the questions we asked of our partners in that room.

The commitment is to make the learning practical; for example, all first-year students have executive coaching. The learning is also deeply relevant to the cause of social justice and informed by the concerns of the field.

Depth and Breadth

The cohorts spend their first year in a mandatory core curriculum spanning learning and teaching, politics and policy and leadership and organizational change.

Professors from the business and public policy schools teach as part of the core faculty, advise students and serve as steering committee members. In their second year, students cross-register for studies in the other professional schools, including Harvard Law School and the School of Public Health to fill gaps in experience or strengthen areas in anticipation of their third-year residency.

The cross fertilization opens up questioning of present practices and assumptions about how to lead traditional school organizations. Quite simply, perspectives around the table can differ substantially about how to change the American public education system and the systems in which it lives. These perspectives often bump against the deeper content knowledge of those steeped in the experience of leading traditional schools. The intentional challenge for the students is to confront difficult dilemmas and to define for themselves, in the context of the cohort, an essential set of core beliefs to be carried into their residency.

Our goal has been to build a residency that offers opportunities to learn, lead and take risks in senior-level roles while offering students opportunities for innovation. For the great majority of students, the residency provides a hands-on opportunity to hone their leadership skills in a supportive professional setting, a trampoline to high-level jobs and an expansion of a growing network of well-placed contacts. But for a few, it has delivered frustrating lessons on the complexity of leading politicized organizations. In those cases, we and the mentors have had to

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Congratulations

Congratulations to Dr. Katie Hawes, Incoming Superintendent of Schools, RSU 21 (7/1/15) and Dr. Joanne Harriman, Superintendent of Schools, RSU 26 for successfully defending their dissertations.

A collaborative approach can improve world language education

When I took my licensure test for prospective secondary French teachers almost 20 years ago, the multiple-choice test was primarily questions asking me to choose the most grammatically correct response; very few questions related to my knowledge of Francophone culture. I felt prepared by my university, and I was excited to embark on my journey as a French teacher. The only standards I knew were my own, which were very high and ambitious for secondary students who might end up in my classroom. I had struggled willingly in my university French courses to participate in communication, student-centered, immersion-based activities so I could develop my oral and written proficiency. My high school teachers had not taught me to use French—they only had taught me to talk about it.

I wanted to teach my students better than my high school teachers had taught me. I wanted students to learn to negotiate, express, and interpret French in oral and written form. My students were going to understand and appreciate Francophone culture. I had studied in France for an academic year, lived with a family, and swam on a French university team. I was ready to share my cultural experiences and knowledge with students. No one ever told me these should have been my goals; my beliefs and values developed because of my experience as a French student, methods student, preservice teacher, and student teacher.

Now, as a university professor and program coordinator of world language education, I find that my students, who are preservice teachers, are facing so many top-down reform initiatives that one might wonder why anyone would consider a career in education. My students must take four different licensure exams, and then they must prove themselves through state-mandated evaluations during their first four years of teaching. These top-down reform initiatives were put in place to improve the quality of teaching and learning, but, with little to no support for teachers once they are in the classroom, I don't foresee meaningful and viable change occurring in world language classrooms without more collaboration between teachers, researchers, and consultants.

New tests, new problems

Universities that want to be accredited to prepare world language teachers must meet standards set by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). Those standards require that 80% of program finishers who want to teach French, German, or Spanish must achieve an identified proficiency level on two high-stakes exams, one in writing, one in oral proficiency. To promote equity, all teacher candidates from accredited universities are being held to the same standard in order to graduate and become licensed teachers. Although no research shows that a proficient teacher actually teaches her class in ways that promote the development of student proficiency, ACTFL representatives have been adamant that teacher candidates meet these standards. Some states have turned away potential student teachers because they could not achieve the proficiency standards. Worse, at a time when there is a shortage of world language teachers, some teacher education programs are cutting world language programs because too few students graduate and earn licensure due to these high-stakes requirements.

ACTFL also is trying to change how teachers teach world languages and, in 2010, encouraged teachers to use the target language at least 90% of the time during classroom instruction. To achieve the 90% goal, teachers would have to create an immersion environment. As Stephen Krashen suggested in the early 1980s, teachers would have to use body language, visual aids, technology, cognates, etc., to get students to understand what they were saying or doing in class (Krashen, 1981). Creating this kind of environment also means teachers step back and listen to what students can produce in the world language that is comprehensible to peers and teachers. ACTFL's implicit message was that too many students were studying world languages for many years without being able to carry on a genuine conversation in that world language.

For the most part, teachers have responded well to the challenge of speaking the target language in class more often—at least in theory. Teachers have arrived in droves at conferences and workshops to learn strategies to increase target language use and improve student proficiency. But what do these teachers do when they go back to their classrooms? Do they implement the proficiency-based methods they learned about? And what is happening with the many teachers who can't or don't attend conferences?

By requiring teacher candidates to pass high-stakes proficiency tests and announcing the 90% target language use challenge, ACTFL hoped students would become more proficient in the language. But just because a teacher is a native speaker or an advanced speaker doesn't mean she has the skills to enable students to use their world language. If the language profession really is going to move forward with more proficiency-based techniques such as immersion, teachers will need more support. Professional development can begin at conferences, workshops, and during online discussions, but to affect world language education in a meaningful and viable way, teachers need professional development that is experiential and collaborative.

Bottoms-up learning

I responded to these twin challenges by creating Experiential Professional Development (EPD) to allow world language teachers time to experiment in their classrooms with the support of a researcher-consultant. The Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound design, inside-out professional development, job-embedded learning, and action research influenced the EPD model. With the appropriate professional development, I believed teachers would learn and use activities that would encourage students to use more of the target world language during interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational tasks. Although teachers used proficiency-based methods during the professional development workshops, they still were resistant to changing their traditional instruction both during and after EPD training.

A collaborative approach*(continued from page 3)*

Four Spanish teachers in one high school participated in the EPD, which was offered as a 10-week graduate course at the school. Teachers learned a variety of proficiency-based methods, participated in peer observations and peer meetings, and spent time with a researcher-consultant who coached them on implementing the new practices. In addition, 28 students from the teachers' classes met with the researcher/consultant in after-school meetings and responded to an open-ended written questionnaire about changes in the teachers' instruction.

As a result of EPD, teachers implemented such activities as daily questions, story writing, student interviews, implicit grammar and vocabulary lessons, skits, improvisation, and computer-mediated communication. However, the teachers still used traditional methods involving grammar and translation. During the three weeks after the EPD course concluded, teachers continued to integrate proficiency-based activities.

Teachers said EPD's experiential design promoted a collaborative community because it incorporated purposeful meetings, peer observations, and peer and student feedback. They appreciated the on-site coaching and practical application that allowed them time to experiment with communication methods during classes. EPD provided an effective alternative to off-site, classroom-based university courses, and allowed for viable change in classrooms.

Even though student disliked avoiding English during class because of their lack of Spanish vocabulary, they understood the importance of maximizing their Spanish use. They understood the importance of maximizing their Spanish use. They understood why teachers had changed their expectations and were asking them to speak more during lessons. Many students believed speaking more in class improved their confidence in speaking Spanish and lowered their stress level for using it.

Achieving real reform

Developing national and state standards, advising teachers to use the target language 90% or more of instructional time, requiring advanced-level proficiency for newly certified teachers, and mandating evidence of progress in student proficiency may promote some change, but relying on top-down reform alone won't create meaningful, viable change in world language classrooms. The results of EPD show that world language education researchers and consultants need to consider the Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011) and to collaborate with teachers in their classrooms to create meaningful, transformative, experiential professional development in which they can understand and apply theory and research into practice effectively. EPD doesn't need to be a university course, but instead can involve a long-term partnership between researchers, consultants, and teachers. To develop partnerships with school districts and engage in participatory action research and/or professional development initiatives, teachers or researcher/consultants can take the following steps:

1. Initiate contact with local teachers or researcher/consultant.
2. Propose a partnership.
3. Researcher/consultant visits teachers' classrooms, observes lessons, and provides positive and constructive feedback.
4. Researcher/consultant asks teachers to reflect on problems they may want to solve in their classrooms, while researcher-consultant also considers possible research or professional development to conduct.
5. Decide collaboratively on research questions and/or focus of professional development.
6. Determine timeline and schedule for research and/or professional development.
7. Begin research and/or professional development.
8. Reflect on and analyze research and/or professional development.
9. Document collaboration, research and/or professional development outcomes, and present and/or publish results of research and/or professional development.
10. Researcher/consultant follows up with support to teachers as needed, or all involved reassess, evaluate, and start new research and/or professional development focus.

Researcher/consultants also can offer experiential professional development on proficiency-based methods for teachers in local school districts by providing regularly scheduled, on-site workshops, coaching in classrooms, and advising sessions for action research projects. To achieve successful reform in world language education, initiatives must be both top-down and bottom-up. Locally, initiatives need to be developed sooner than later, before too many programs are cut at the university and secondary levels as a result of top-down policy. Teachers must be willing to open their doors and researcher/consultants must find time to spend in classrooms to help teachers and students understand how practice can meet theory.

-Phi Delta Kappan, April 2015, by Brigid M. Burke

Mark Your Calendar



EVENT	VENUE	DATE	
MSBA Day at the Statehouse	Cross Office Café, Cross Office Building—10:30 AM Hall of Flags, Statehouse—11:00 AM	5/27/15	Email MSMA to let us know names of board members attending.
104th Annual Commissioner's Conference	Sunday River's Jordan Hotel in Newry	6/28-6/30/15	Register Draft Agenda
AASA Legislative Advocacy Conference	Washington, D.C.	7/7-7/9/15	More Info
MSSA Fall Meeting	Augusta Civic Center	10/21/15	Save the Date!
42nd Annual MSMA Fall Conference	Augusta Civic Center	10/22-10/23/15	Save the Date!

Professional Vacancies

Vocational Region 7

CTE Director

Waldo, Maine

Application Deadline: May 12, 2015

Effective Date: July 1, 2015

For complete details on all vacancies, visit

<http://www.msmaweb.com/mssa/job-vacancies/>

Harvard's bet

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the host organization.

Redefining Preparation

In my eyes, as someone who spent six years in a major urban superintendency and is less than 18 months removed from that arena, the Ed.L.D. program represents an extraordinary experiment in redefining the development of leaders for system-level transformation across sectors.

The way that conversation last October immersed superintendents and leaders of charter management organizations, state governments, nonprofits and the nation's largest philanthropies in a shared consideration of the challenges of developing leaders is strikingly unique in a decade marked by heated debate about K-12 education.

An array of capstone projects formed the backdrop for our discussion: They included leading turnaround efforts for networks of district schools, redesigning literacy instruction for a nationally celebrated charter, and rethinking community engagement as a component of a philanthropic organization's on-the-ground efforts. These projects offer a glimpse of the opportunities and constraints at play today in transforming American education.

The challenges of improvement and invention continue, but the possibility for thoughtfully developing the people who will meet those challenges seems the right bet to me.

-AASA School Administrator, March 2015, by Andres Alonso

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AASA News

APRIL 17, 2015

[AASA Statement: Senate Committee Passes ESEA Reauthorization Bill](#)

APRIL 08, 2015

[2015 Bammy Award Nominations Now Open](#)

APRIL 07, 2015

[Texas Superintendent Alton Frailey Elected AASA President-Elect](#)

APRIL 06, 2015

[AASA, State Affiliates Sign Letter Supporting ESEA Reauthorization](#)



If you have questions about any articles in this newsletter or suggestion for improving this publication, please let us know.

You can contact me, MSSA Executive Director Robert Hasson at rhasson@msmaweb.com.