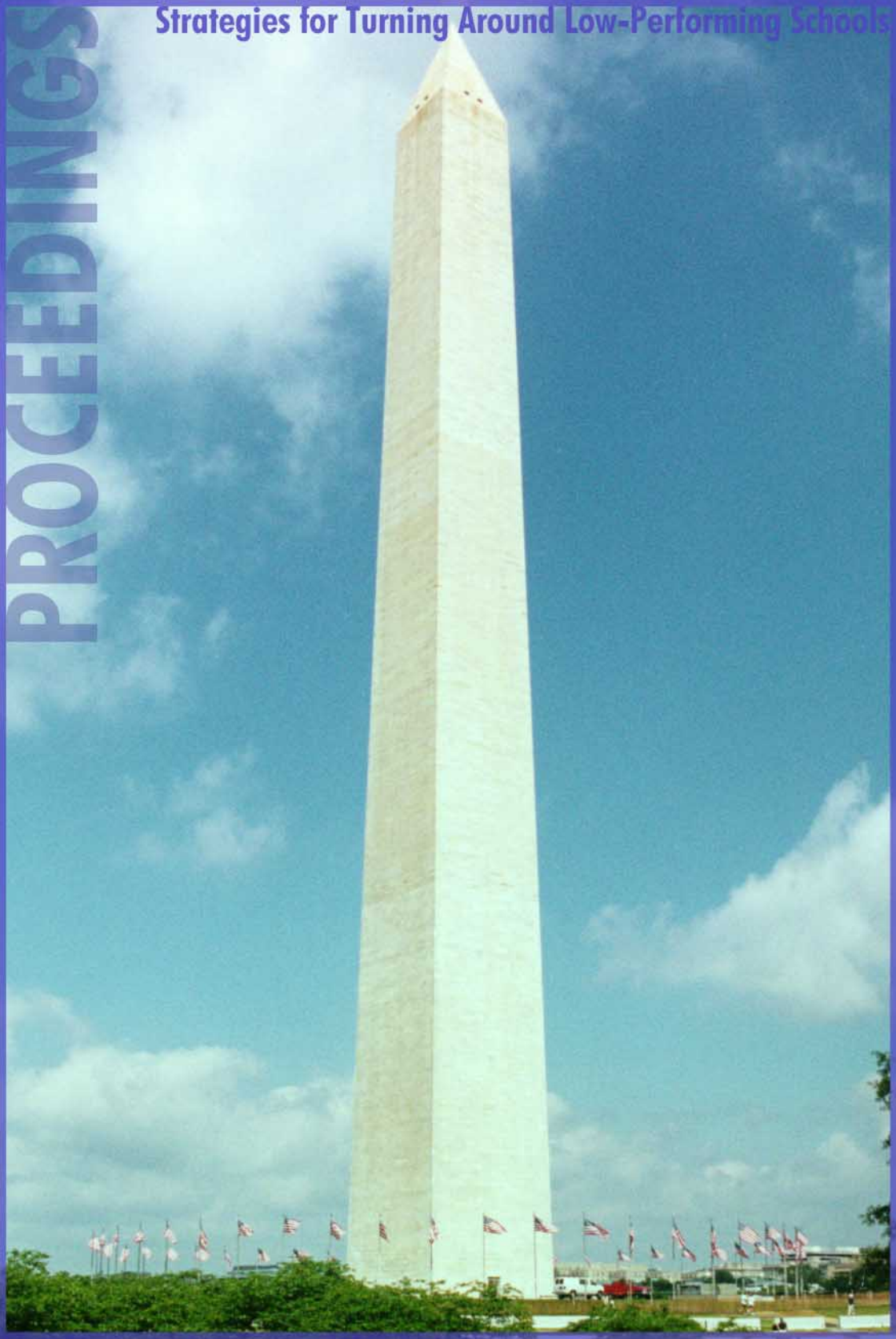
The U.S. Department of Education's
Improving America's Schools
Summer Institute 2000

PROCEEDINGS

Strategies for Turning Around Low-Performing Schools



July 13-14, 2000
Washington, D.C.

SERVE
Improving Learning through Research & Development

The U.S. Department of Education's Improving America's Schools Summer Institute 2000 Proceedings:

Strategies for Turning Around Low-Performing Schools

July 13-14, 2000
Washington, D.C.

The U.S. Department of Education

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Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Plenary Sessions

Bill Kincaid of the U.S. Department of Education's Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program welcomed participants, commenting, "This conference will foster discussion on the 'meat and potatoes' of reform—what goes into making low-performing schools successful. This summer institute is all about what we have learned and what works to turn around low-performing schools."

Turning Around Low-Performing Schools: A National Perspective

Speaker: Michael Cohen, Assistant Secretary, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, U.S. Department of Education

Mary Jean LeTendre, Director of Title I, introduced Assistant Secretary Mike Cohen. Cohen opened by saying, "The demand for increased performance is growing. Current standards reflect our belief that all children can learn. Income, background, and needs do not define intelligence. Schools are feeling the pressure to improve. There is no work that is more urgent than the task of turning low-performing schools around and lifting them up. In fact, we've been seeing significant improvements, particularly in high-poverty, low-performing schools, and that's what this conference is concerned with: locating the resources available to get the job done."

Cohen continued: "We are moving in the right direction, and we are seeing results. The umbrella of accountability is helping us move in the right direction. This accountability offers both pressure to improve and support to do so. We use standards and assessments to identify students who need assistance. We hold schools accountable, but we need to increase our support.

"We know teacher quality counts," Cohen asserted. "Yet some systems go out of their way to give students in low-performing schools the teachers least likely to be teaching in their field of expertise. We know what good professional development looks like, but we don't do it better. We continue to use the 'spray and pray' approach. We need focused content, and it needs to be sustained.

"We need a schoolwide focus on high standards in academics, particularly in core subjects, including extended learning opportunities. We need a sharper focus on a balanced reading approach and early intervention and family literacy. Don't wait till he's in the fourth grade to say he can't read!

"We need instructional leadership—not just strong principals—to communicate the vision and to keep us focused. We know we need parental involvement and good attendance—showing up matters. And accountability matters. It shouldn't be a 'gotcha!' but there should be sound consequences and sustained, ongoing help."

Cohen concluded: "We have big tasks ahead of us, and the U.S. Department of Education is trying to help. There is an annual report to be issued this fall on trends in low-performing schools and what's turning them around. We must strengthen support for Comprehensive Centers and Regional Educational Laboratories. We must focus on how state and local education agencies and higher education support high-poverty, low-performing schools. Finally, how do we engage others in turning around low-performing schools, and what can we at the U.S. Department of Education do better to help you with your tasks?"

Turning Around Low-Performing Schools: A State Perspective

Speaker: Dennis Parker, Manager, District and School Program Coordination Office, California Department of Education

Dennis Parker focused his remarks on best practices and accountability as tools for continuous improvement. Parker looked at the "bad news" in California, the "good news" in Texas, and the "best practices" necessary to school improvement.

The bad news is that the number of poverty schools in California has doubled in the last five years, Parker noted.

"We say that poverty equals low performance. It is true they are so often correlated in the statistics, but now for some good news: In El Paso, Texas, from the 92-93 school year to the 97-98 school year, minorities surpassed whites on the TASS state assessment test. Their vision was 'we expect you to be successful. How you do it is up to you. If you are successful, you will be free to continue doing what you are doing that works. If you are not successful, we are here to help, and you had better use it.'

"We basically have three things to look at," Parker commented. "We need to see how things are, how they could be, and how to make it so. To do this, we need to look at best practices."

Parker explained, "Best practices must be based on data. For optimal performance, you need clear targets (content, standards, and academic focus), know-how (teacher quality and leadership), and feedback (assessment and accountability)."

Parker cited several studies, including information on teacher competency and the effect of teachers in the classroom, tutorial instruction and its effect on student achievement, and characteristics of high-poverty, high-achieving schools.

"We need to be relentlessly obsessive. If you want it bad enough, we have the 'know-how,'" he said. "But the head and heart need to move the hands and feet."

Turning Around Low-Performing Schools: Unlikely Leaders

Speaker: Hugh Burkett, Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program, U.S. Department of Education

Hugh Burkett began by disclosing, "I grew up poor, a sharecropper's son on a tobacco farm in North Carolina. My parents did not have a lot of formal education. My mother reached the fifth grade; my father, the seventh grade.

"They may not have had much education, but they knew a lot, and they knew how to teach me. We didn't have many books in our home, but we had *Field and Stream*, the *Sears Catalog*, and farm machinery repair manuals, which I read. But I also learned a lot from my father who taught me about the care and maintenance of machinery and how to do the work on the farm.

"When I was young, if you asked me if I could repair something, I'd say, 'No, but I can fix it.'" He knew what he had to do, but he did not always know how to do it. Similarly, in improving low-performing schools, Burkett said, "You know what you have to do, and you don't always know how to do it, but the first step is absolutely knowing what it is you must do."

At one point, a principal of a low-performing school said to him, "Our kids are doing as well as they can. Don't worry about it." Burkett commented, "As long as that principal felt that way, he didn't really know what he had to do, and he was content to leave it the way it was."

Burkett continued, "When I was a superintendent, my job was to help my schools to actualize their vision of doing better. If we had continued to spend our resources to do what we had always done, the schools would not have changed. I told the teachers, 'We have to find a different way for you to do your work, and we will find the means to support you as you do things differently.' And the teachers became very interested. This started a process, and we put systems in place to support the schools in this change."

However, Burkett commented, "You can have two schools that look very much the same. They may have the same demographics in their students, have the same amount of money, receive the same district support, and they may both adopt the same model. And one has not changed while one has improved. What is the difference? It is about will. Do we have the will to improve, to turn around low-performing schools? What is the role we are going to play individually in making this happen? If we don't believe we can teach our kids to succeed, we are never going to get there."

He said, "District support is there to break down barriers. District support is for blazing trails. Who has the voice to support the poor kids? If we don't speak for the poor kids, who will speak for them? Again, the use of resources is very important, and the control around

resources and staffing is very important. What is the belief system that drives us? Are our actions tied to our belief system? You may say that you want to change the schools, and you want every child to learn, but the actions that you tie to that belief system will show how much you truly believe in that."

He then challenged the group, "What are you going to do when you go back home about turning around low-performing schools? What will you do when the barriers get put in place? We have an unmet obligation to teach all kids. We cannot make excuses about why we cannot do it. How can we see things we know are not right and not do something about it? We have a Presidential order that says we need to help low-performing schools. It gives me new drive, renewed motivation for this work.

"There are no guarantees in terms of money and staffing, but does that change my leadership ability? Does that change my belief about what we need to do? No, even if the funding is cut, that should not change your ability to be a leader. So, whether you are a principal or district leader or whatever, you have got to believe in your ability to change and turn around low-performing schools.

"Growing up poor, I realized that many people had low expectations for me just because of that fact, but there were leaders that stepped into my life—people along the way who believed in me and supported me, and what a difference that has made. If it were only up to the school system and the 'caste' system that was in place at that time, I would not have become successful, and I would not be standing here in front of you today. But unlikely leaders have stepped up to the plate in my life."

He then went on to describe a professor named Dr. Blakely who saw something in him and his willingness to try to fix things, and Blakely became a mentor to him and had a profound impact on his ability to make it through the university. This is the key to the district's role in school reform, Burkett explained, "to be like those unlikely leaders and to step up to the plate and to say we do expect this to improve. You are going to have to change things, but we are going to support you and get you the resources you need to make this happen."

Burkett closed by saying, "I hope you leave here with new commitments to all of our kids and a sparked interest to think in different ways about how we are going to turn our schools around. Never underestimate your ability and responsibility in helping kids move into new places in their lives."

Turning Around Low-Performing Schools: A District Perspective

Speaker: Gary Thrift, Area Executive Officer, Baltimore City Schools, Maryland

"In Baltimore City Schools, we embraced comprehensive school reform in 18 schools," Gary Thrift explained. "District leaders facilitated this work and did not impede school reform. We started with Core Knowledge and Direct Instruction, and then 16 more schools joined in.

"The system has to provide the capacity to support the schools undertaking comprehensive school reform models," Thrift continued. "So we've offered the following types of systemic support:

- Full-time Direct Instruction consultants to work with schools
- All-day kindergarten
- An 11-month contract with five weeks of summer intensive training
- A full-time Direct Instruction-trained substitute located at each school

"Here are some of my observations as an Area Superintendent with these schools: You need to have the capacity to support the implementation of the models, and that can be tough if you have too many different models to support."

Thrift continued, "School and district leadership need to be in sync, and a district master plan needs to be in place. Schools then have a school plan aligned with the district plan." Thrift described what schools need: collaborative relationships, professionalism, improved governance, sound tools of measurement, measurable goals and benchmarks, and rewards and sanctions.

"District staff members need to know what the reform model looks like and help track progress. Everyone is held responsible: district leadership, the principal, teachers, and parents. In fact, parental and community involvement should comprise one-third of the membership of the school improvement team.

"The focus of change must be the entire school. If people won't change, change the people! Reform reaches all the students; this is why it is 'whole-school reform.'

"Teachers need high-quality, ongoing professional development. We have to promote the professionalism of teachers through participation in conferences and memberships in professional organizations. Teacher quality has the greatest impact on student learning."

The bottom line, according to Thrift, is that "we need teacher quality, leadership, and accountability in our schools."

Working Together: A Discussion with Federal Program Directors

Moderator: Jackie Jackson, Deputy Director, Title I, U.S. Department of Education

Highlights from the Panel Discussion:

Mary Jean LeTendre, Director, Title I - "You need one set of standards and one set of assessments for all children; all must be included in the assessment, and all must be accounted for."

Joseph Conaty, Director, New Projects Unit - "We must continue to look to research-based strategies and best practices supported by evidence.... But we face a daunting challenge: we must all become sophisticated, critical consumers."

Pat Gore, Director, Goals 2000 - "For educational improvement, we need focus, clear educational goals, strong curriculum and instruction, and continuous assessment. Academic excellence and sustainability are most important."

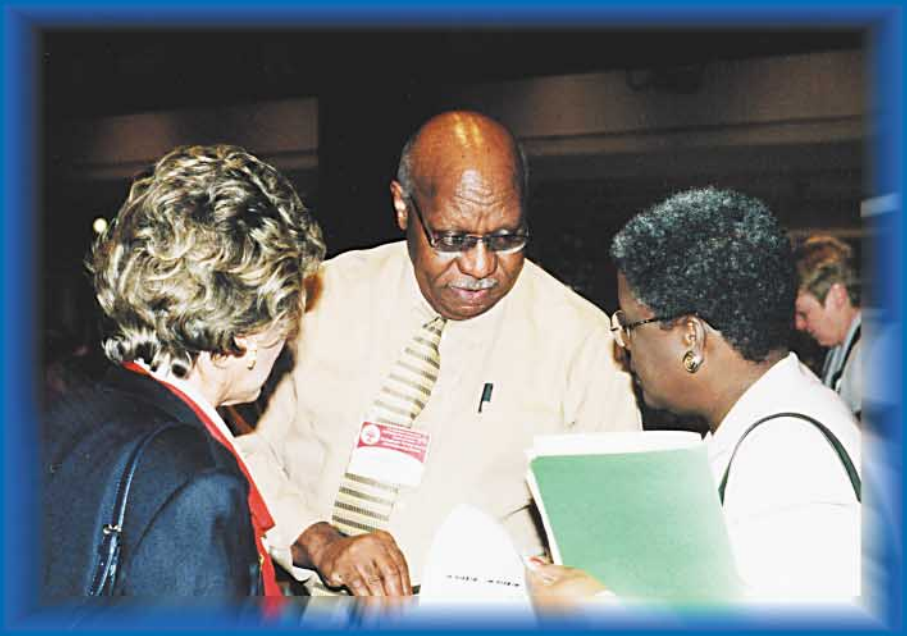
Bill Kincaid, Project Manager, Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program - "Comprehensive School Reform speaks to low-performing schools in three ways: its focus on the process of planning and implementation, its comprehensiveness and movement away from piecemeal approaches, and its emphasis on external support and assistance."

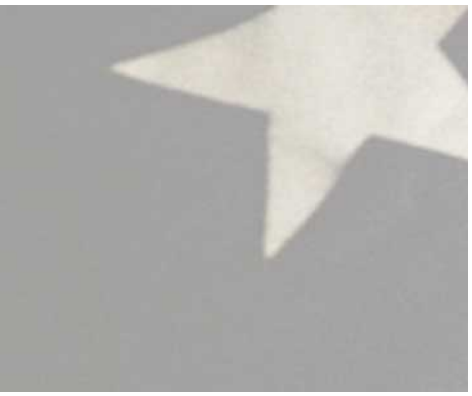
Art Cole, Director, School Improvement Programs - "Professional development questions to ask: Is there an analysis of needs at the school? Are there benchmarks? Is everyone involved? Are resources sufficient? Are you using research-based best practices in professional development?"

Charlotte Gillespie, Group Leader, Safe and Drug-Free Schools - "A safe school is one that addresses a broad range of student needs, builds partnerships with parents and communities, and offers a learning environment that is safe and orderly."

Alex Goniprow, Group Leader, Office of Migrant Education - "Migrant students can offer challenges to their schools due to their mobility. Given that situation, we must not consider them a burden, but an opportunity to deal with their needs."

David Beaulieu, Director, Office of Indian Education - "We've had the Indian Education Act for 20 years, yet our students are still facing some of the same dilemmas. Their educational level has improved, but we need to focus on comprehensive designs to meet their needs...their real needs. We've been focusing on intergovernmental cooperation to address these needs."





Breakout Sessions

Facilitators:
Rita Hale, Northwest Regional Education Laboratory Comprehensive Center
Ed Tobia, Southwest Education Development Laboratory (SEDL)

Panelists:
Katy Herbold, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Fredricksburg Independent School District, Texas
Peggy Matli, Assistant Principal, Fredricksburg High School, Fredricksburg, Texas
Ric LaTour, Coordinator of Title I and Title VI, Oregon State Department of Education
Leanna Maglienti, Office of the Secretary, U.S. Department of Education
Yoon Durbin, Office of the Secretary, U.S. Department of Education

The session examined professional development and how schools/districts/states can provide quality professional development on an ongoing basis. Participants focused on what is generally considered the biggest obstacle to good professional development: time. They discussed ways of increasing the amount of time that can be used for professional development, including changing the schedules, using staff meetings more efficiently, allowing teachers who teach the same grade to have the same period off so they can share their expertise, and incorporating districtwide coaches who visit the schools.

Presenters asked, "What do we know about good professional development?" The National Staff Development Council has a vision of professional development sessions based on student, teacher, and school needs, providing ample time, and led by teachers. There are several research-based principles of professional development, including the following characteristics:

- Aligned through a clear, coherent plan
- Focused on both content and process of student learning
- Goals compared with achievement
- Continuous programs developed
- Supported with resources
- Connected to a comprehensive change process

Supportive conditions for professional development include the following:

- A supportive schoolwide culture and structure
- Systematic district-level support
- External policies that are aligned across the various influences on teaching and student learning

Presenters noted that good professional development must be the theory underlying all the things that occur in the school environment. In fact, many federal programs, including CSRD, have identified professional development as critical to school improvement. Good professional development is often job-embedded with follow up in the classroom. In addition, the format selected for professional development programs needs to be appropriate in light of the goals of the session. However, as one presenter pointed out, "Time is our enemy." Time is the key issue in research on school change. Ultimately, the keys to effective professional development are time, focus, coordination, and expertise.

The following two ongoing projects are presented as examples:

- Distinguished Educator Program—an Oregon state-level program based on the professional development literature. The Distinguished Educators are people with proven track records in low-performing schools. The state has hired these people and assigned them to several low-performing schools to assist with reform.
- Distinguished Schools Program—another Oregon state-level program that provides extra resources to high-performing, high-poverty schools so that they can host visiting practitioners. It is important for the state department to coordinate its programs, including report requests and deadlines, to reduce the burden on schools.

Other suggestions for improving professional development programs were offered, including the following:

- States need to remove certain unnecessary requirements. For example, certain issues, such as harassment, have to be covered every year. Teachers do not understand why the same issues have to be covered every year, while the issues that they feel could improve their teaching are not covered.
- Several professional development opportunities should be offered, and teachers should be allowed to decide which to attend.
- Greater flexibility at the school level to change management practices will allow more time for professional development. For example, eliminate management-dominated meetings, and instead, send all of the announcements that used to be covered in meetings as memos to the teachers. Then, scheduled meetings will signify that there is a significant issue for them to work on.
- One approach that works well is having each teacher develop a personal professional development plan every year, choosing their activities and explaining how they will improve their classroom practices.

In closing the session, two representatives from the U.S. Department of Education passed out resource sheets on professional development.

Allocating and Reallocating Resources

Facilitators:
Sharon Beckstrom, Region III Comprehensive Center
Gail Clark, Mid-continent Regional Education Laboratory (McREL)

First and Second Session Panelists:
Carolyn Clement, Consultant - CSRD, Kansas State Department of Education
Norma Cregan, Education Consultant, Kansas State Department of Education
Amy Beck, Principal, McCloud Elementary School, Kansas
Mary Jean LeTendre, Director, Title I, U.S. Department of Education
Leah Maselli, Instructional Associate, Sharon City School District, Pennsylvania
Cheryl Panek, Director, Lifelong Learning Council, Sharon City, Pennsylvania
Julie Yuda, Program Manager, CSRD - State of Pennsylvania

This session described ways that schools and districts can change the way they think about resources and how they should be spent. Resources may include money, time, people, facilities, expertise, and information. This session also focused upon the importance of having a vision and establishing a needs assessment. Some of the important issues covered include the following:

- Data-driven decisions
- Challenging curriculum
- Community and parent support
- Ongoing technical assistance
- District support for school efforts
- Assistance of an outside "critic"
- Matching the school's needs
- Staffing and personnel issues
- Staff buy-in

Presenters explained that schools and districts need to decide first on their needs and set priorities. They must examine the data, decide on instructional strategies, and then allocate resources accordingly. Then, the schools and districts need to put all of their money together and pay for the greatest needs first. To do so will be difficult, and it may anger some people, but it has to be done to raise student achievement. Other barriers to resource reallocation include the following variables:

- The district administrator
- Teacher aversion to change
- Lack of control over selection

One presenter commented, "To successfully accomplish comprehensive school reform, schools and districts must know how to make their resources work together to support improved student learning."

In one example offered, the Kansas Department of Education set the tone by re-organizing itself to better serve the state's schools. The state said to the schools and districts that they needed to think differently about how they allocate resources and reexamine how they do business.

Norma Cregan noted, "Awhile ago, our department went through a re-organization so that the people in charge of each district could handle all of the federal dollars (Title I, Title II, Reading Excellence, etc.) being used by their schools and districts. This process allowed us to help schools coordinate and integrate funds better since they would no longer have to deal with different people for each of the various federal funding streams they may have been using."

Cregan continued, "When we ask schools and districts to complete a budget plan (called the locally consolidated plan), we tell them to lay out all of the budget items on the same page (Title I, Migrant Ed, CSRD, etc.) so they can look more comprehensively at how they use their resources. Granted, we still have a problem with teachers, principals, and superintendents trying to keep their pet projects, but putting all of the information together makes it harder to hide these projects."

As part of that state's accreditation and accounting system, each school must complete a school profile that is research-based, includes total staff involvement, and includes student achievement data, which must be data-driven. They are required to look at math and reading data, but they may also look at science, writing, or other subject areas. Some schools include all of these assessments. Each school in Kansas must have a site council that includes school officials, parents, and others.

Presenters pointed to the following things that have been successful:

- Site-based management
- District-level support in looking at funding sources
- Schools having more control over available resources
- Schools using money to improve student achievement

Mary Jean LeTendre concluded with the following suggestion: "You need to get someone from outside the school with a critical eye."

Collaboration—External Partners/Parent Involvement/Community Involvement

Facilitators:
Johnnie Follins, Region XIV Comprehensive Center
Brett Lane, Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University (LAB)

Panelists:
Orlando Castro, Director, Office of Program Review and Improvement, New Jersey Department of Education
Linnea Weiland, Director, Curriculum and Instruction, Plainfield School District, New Jersey
Doris Williams, Principal, Cedarbrook Elementary School, Plainfield, New Jersey
Gloria Williams, Principal, Evergreen Elementary School, Plainfield, New Jersey
Ronald Pedone, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education

This session presented the experience of reform and collaboration in the state of New Jersey, focusing especially on the accomplishments of Plainfield Public Schools. A key component of New Jersey's Whole School Reform effort is developing partnerships between the state, district, school, and external model developers. Through this collaboration, each partner plays a significant role in implementing the reform model.

As session facilitator Johnnie Follins stated in her introductory remarks, "School reform cannot occur without the meaningful involvement of the parents and the community. If there is no connection between the school and the community, students must respond to competing goals. Communication is the key for collaboration."

As part of the district's school reform, Plainfield Public Schools engaged in a community planning process to involve parents and community members in creating a collaborative culture. Through partnerships with agencies, businesses, and higher education institutions, Plainfield enjoys early childhood programs, extended-day learning, increased technology training, and science and math support.

A two-year community planning process yielded the following six long-range goals to build a standards-based system:

- Student achievement
- State certification
- Collaborative partnerships
- Effective and efficient operations
- Safe, orderly, and exciting environment
- Parent and community involvement

The presenters outlined the responsibilities of participants at the state, district, and school levels. At the state level, presenter Orlando Castro described the functions and interaction of the Department of Education, the Whole School Reform Developers, the School Review and Improvement Teams, the District Central Office, and the individual schools.

Linnea Weiland, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, shared their mission statement:

> The Plainfield Public Schools, in partnership with its community, shall do whatever it takes for every student to achieve high academic standards. No alibis. No excuses. No exceptions.

Weiland also spoke of the importance of creating a collaborative relationship with the Plainfield Education Association and the Plainfield Association of Supervisors and Administrators.

A view of Whole School Reform at the building level was provided by Gloria Williams and Doris Williams, both elementary principals in the Plainfield School District. They described a number of collaborative partnerships as well as ideas for family involvement. Weiland summarized with the following "Lessons Learned":

* More is not always better. Learn to say, "No, thank you."
* Pursue partnerships that address your focus.
* Mold projects to the needs of your school.
* Be relentless in pursuing parent involvement. Do whatever it takes.

Participants in the session explored and discussed the many opportunities for school improvements through partnerships and collaboration. During the question and answer period, participants in the session discussed varying models for school reform. Central to that discussion was the existence and availability of assessment components to determine the success of the varying models and the extent to which they align themselves with the state standards and core curriculum. Participants were cautioned that it is important to recognize the difference between a model and a program and to remember that the whole district program is what accounts for success.

Research-Based Best Practices in Reading

Facilitators:
Trudy Hensley, Region XIV Comprehensive Center
Steve Moats, AEL

First and Second Session Panelists:
Phyllis Hunter, Consultant, Texas Statewide Reading Initiative
David Hernandez, Co-Chair, International Reading Association Urban Diversity Commission
Nancy Rhett, Reading Excellence Program, U.S. Department of Education

As facilitator Trudy Hensley introduced the first session, she stated that the participants would have the opportunity to "hear from the implementation side." Phyllis Hunter's opening remark set the tone for her presentation, "I feel by your presence here today that reading is the number-one skill, it is the gateway skill, it is the new civil right." This three-pronged presentation delineated actions taken by the state of Texas to assist low-performing schools, discussed the Reading Excellence Act and the Reading Panel Report, and reviewed the Six Dimensions of Reading as set forth in the Reading Excellence Act. Those Six Dimensions are as follows:

- Phonemic Awareness
- Motivation
- Systematic Phonics
- Vocabulary and Background Knowledge
- Comprehension
- Fluency

Participants learned of a wealth of strategies and approaches that relied heavily on a strong interface among schools, parents, businesses, and communities. "Parents will forgive you for a lot of things, but if you don't keep their kids safe and you don't teach them to read, they are

unforgiving." Hunter outlined the Reading Academies, a five-day intensive staff development training program for all 17,983 kindergarten teachers and all 33,000 first-grade teachers in the state of Texas. She also spoke of the initiative, "Every Teacher is a Reading Teacher." Based on this concept, for example, physical education teachers were expected to be versed in vocabulary and literature related to sports and sports figures. As a result, they were prepared to reach those children for whom sports may hold the only key to motivation.

Hunter concluded her presentation by showing a video, which detailed the Six Dimensions of Reading of the Reading Excellence Program.

In the second session, David Hernandez was able to share the practitioner's perspective on best practices in reading. As a third-grade teacher, Hernandez spoke of the need to connect with his students and to address the issues that negatively impact a child's ability to learn. He shared information regarding the characteristics of the English language that make it so difficult to learn, particularly for those students who are learning English as their second language. Hernandez reviewed the position paper of the International Reading Association entitled, "Making a Difference Means Making it Different." This publication honors children's rights to excellent reading instruction, and those rights are as follows:

- Children have a right to appropriate early reading instruction based on their individual needs.
- Children have a right to reading instruction that builds both the skill and the desire to read increasingly complex materials.
- Children have a right to well-prepared teachers who keep their skills up to date through effective professional development.
- Children have a right to access a wide variety of books and other reading materials in the classroom, school, and community libraries.
- Children have a right to reading assessment that identifies their strengths as well as their needs and involves them in making decisions about their own learning.
- Children who are struggling with reading have a right to receive intensive instruction from professionals specifically prepared to teach reading.
- Children have a right to reading instruction that involves parents and communities in their academic lives.
- Children have a right to reading instruction that makes meaningful use of their first language skills.
- Children have the right to equal access to the technology used for the improvement of reading instruction.
- Children have a right to classrooms that optimize learning opportunities.

Panelist Nancy Rhett noted, "Children need continued learning support after third grade in explicit teaching strategies." She also remarked that pullout-reading programs present a disadvantage, as they do not affect changes in classroom instruction. She also presented a summary of the Reading Excellence Program and the Six Dimensions of Reading, which were outlined in a video that concluded this session.

In the question and answer segment, participants engaged in a lively discussion of linguistic diversity. One of the conferees shared the website of the LAB at Brown University, noting that the LAB's primary focus is to explore how education can better address the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse populations.

Facilitators:
Sheila Weiss, WestEd Comprehensive Assistance Center
David Zuckerman, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL)

Panelists:
Susan Johnson, CSRD Program Coordinator, Maine Department of Education
Ted Hamann, Northeast and Islands Regional Education Laboratory at Brown University

Facilitator David Zuckerman explained that evaluation has three purposes illustrated through the following questions and answers:

Q: What does the state need?
A: It needs to know how you did and so schools have to use state instruments.

Q: What do we need?
A: We need guidance along the way. Teachers use evaluation constantly in dealing with individual students, but schools usually do not use evaluation for guidance. The guidance function comes when evaluation is taken over by the insiders.

Q: What information do our stakeholders need?
A: Sustaining support for CSR means we have to engage in continuous improvement.

The following are three big issues that need to be addressed:

- When you are defining your program and deciding what data to gather, how many people will be involved? If many people are involved, the process may take a long time and become frustrating. If only a few people are involved, those left out may not support the plan.
- Who collects, analyzes, and communicates the information? Time for program maintenance may take away from program implementation.
- You need support from the district. The school can't control all of the things it wants to without the district seeing incentives to do things differently.

You also have to consider the following:

- Who owns the information needed?
- What information will be most compelling to teachers?
- How can information be presented to make it compelling?

Maine was offered as an example. "Local autonomy is a major factor in Maine. Maine has gone about CSRD differently from all other states," presenter Susan Johnson explained. "It started right out of Promising Futures [a Maine initiative to improve secondary schools], and all schools can restructure themselves under the program. Maine tied CSRD to Promising Futures and made it just for secondary schools."

For evaluation, Maine has developed mandatory school portfolios, which contain evidence of implementation progress. To facilitate the process in the schools, the state department distributed its continuum of evidence. The portfolios are going well. Ideally, they are put together by all staff members throughout the school year and offer a complete picture of what has been done, how challenges have been met, and what challenges still must be overcome.

One school now presents its portfolio to its school board and at a parent and community meeting. In the portfolio, the school must collect data, reflect on its work, and project for the next year; then, schools present and defend their portfolios to a panel of state officials. Side benefits of the portfolios have been the creation of personalized links between schools and state education agencies, the informal feedback that has helped with implementation, and the documentation that the portfolio provides when new staff members begin working with the school.

The main challenges so far have been

- Getting all schools to use data
- Giving schools about ten common measures and having them collect the information consistently
- Getting schools to develop more student achievement goals
- Having schools see the portfolio as a learning tool
- Helping schools see what real evidence of work is (e.g., the outcomes of a meeting, not the agenda and participant list)

In general, presenters noted, it is difficult to be both a supporter and an evaluator.

Alignment of Curriculum, Standards, and Assessments

Facilitators:
Pat Ceperley, AEL
Monica Mann, Region XV Pacific Center

Panelists:
John Metcalfe, Director of Curriculum and Assessment, Fremont School District 1, Lander, Wyoming
Sue Rigney, Title I Standards, Assessments, and Accountability Team, U.S. Department of Education

As more and more states are mandating standards and assessments, school districts must align their curriculum to these standards. Research shows that for aligned units, scores on unit assessments predict scores on standardized tests.

This session described practical strategies for school districts to align their curriculum and instruction with standards and assessments. John Metcalfe presented a first-hand account of the alignment process as experienced by his school district when Wyoming introduced content standards and state assessments.

A rubric for establishing alignment includes

- Revising curriculum collaboratively
- Aligning curriculum with standards
- Specifying a time line for implementation
- Listing resources for new curriculum

Instruction is indirectly linked to assessment through alignment with the standards. Participants in the session discussed the challenges of meeting state content standards and assessment and the impact on student learning.

One participant commented, “Alignment accounts for 50 percent of the variance in student performance. And alignment can be more powerful than socio-economic status, gender, or teacher effect for predicting results on standardized tests.”

Session outcomes included the following:

- An understanding of the alignment process to state standards and assessments
- An opportunity to hear a first-hand account of a school district that had undertaken the process
- Ideas of ways to align curriculum with state standards
- Knowledge of the impact of standards on the school district

Using Data to Drive Reform—The Classroom Perspective

Facilitators:
Maria-Paz Avery, New England Comprehensive Center
Barbara Davis, SERVE

Panelists:
Pat Sciarappa, High School Teacher/Training Specialist, Quality Academy, Pinellas County Schools, Florida
Genay Rancorn, Teacher, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Elementary, Pinellas County Schools, Florida
Peggy Siegal, Director, Business/Education Leadership Initiative, National Alliance of Business
Mary Moran, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, U.S. Department of Education

This session focused on how teachers can engage students in using data and on how to build capacity for all to contribute to accountability in an aligned fashion. Presenters showed video clips of kindergarten students reading and analyzing their work with rubrics. The students clearly understood their strengths and what they needed to do to improve, and they understood their responsibility for their own learning. Behind the scenes, teachers had put systems in place in the classroom to make that happen.

This shifts the focus on teaching to a focus on learning. Presenters noted that "the real issue is kids doing what they need to do and adults doing what they need to do." All must make improvement decisions based on data. Thus, using data changes the culture.

No longer do students ask, "What are we going to do today? What's my grade? Why do I have to do this?" Now, the questions are for them: "Where are you? Where do you want to be? What do you need to do to get there?"

Student data folders are student-owned and controlled. One elementary teacher noted, "I am very careful how I use student data in the classroom. I don't share an individual's data with the whole class. Each student works directly from his or her own data."

However, sharing classroom data empowers the students to improve classroom performance. Students are involved in all classroom data processes: data selection, collection, analysis, and improvements to the data system.

Data can be used to improve student performance in curriculum areas, attendance, and behavior.

Three kinds of data are used to improve school systems and performance:

- Classroom data
- Team or grade-level data
- Schoolwide data

Using Data to Drive Reform—The Schoolwide Perspective

Facilitator:
Joseph Porzio, New York Technical Assistance Center (NYTAC)

Panelists:
Larry Friedman, North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL)
Susan M. Grady, Director, Content and Learning Team, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Scott Jones, Director, School Improvement, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Judy Sargent, Wisconsin Cooperative Educational Service Agency Standards and Assessment Center

This session talked about getting the entire school community focused on achievement results and how data retreats can be a powerful way to focus attention on the need to have student achievement data determine the school's needs, what needs are most important, and how those needs could be addressed. Data retreats teach people how useful data can be as a resource in turning around low-performing schools.

In particular, this session described how Wisconsin conducts data retreats, which started several years ago with a vision for improving standards and learning. While visiting schools, the state superintendent always heard that schools needed help in implementing standards and assessments. So they funded 12 standards and assessment centers to help the schools and intermediate districts. The data retreat emerged to achieve the following three goals:

- Help local districts adopt standards
- Help local districts align curriculum and standards
- Help teachers understand the standards and what assessment is about

Presenter Judy Sargent related, "We developed data retreats: the periodic, systematic use of data to shape our direction, where we take school teams of parents, teachers, and principals away from school for a few days and have them bring all their data, and then we just go through it. We have them draw big pictures of their data so they can see it. We ask them to use the data to identify and rank their biggest problems. And then we ask them to determine solutions to problems and to use the data to see if the solutions worked."

One school looked at the data and realized their biggest problem was attendance. Most of the kids were out on the first day of hunting season and on the day before a holiday. To solve the problem, the school had to think of a way to get the kids to show up for school on these days. The school had a carnival every year, so they started to give students tickets for the carnival games and rides if they attended on these certain days, and the absentee rate dropped in half.

Sargent explained, "Schools have to come to terms with who they are, where they are headed, and where they should be going. It can be a powerful experience, especially when the classroom teachers are involved in the data retreat. Data retreats provide training and help the participants become action researchers."

Practitioners tend to make decisions instinctively instead of based on data. We need clarity in what we want to do and how we should get there. Staff members in a successful school examine data all year. In a data retreat, they look at achievement, demographic, program, and perceptions data. Reflective collaboration is what happens at a data retreat, where one has the opportunity to

- Reflect
- Observe patterns in the data
- Collaborate in figuring out what the data mean
- Set improvement goals that are measurable

During data retreats, schools that feed each other work together and observe trends in the data for the first time. The retreat aims to build the use of data into a normal part of teachers' professional practice. After the retreat, the schools can take the good data that emerges and share it with the community. They take the rest of the data and use it to target and work on weaknesses.

Presenters commented that they "prefer to do three-day district retreats in which we can look at a child's whole education. We honor all hypotheses; then, we examine data to see which hypotheses do not fit the patterns."

These retreats are of particular benefit to CSRD schools, which are focused on the data. They have started recording and telling their success stories. They are creating internal clearinghouses for their data and have it all at the school site. This year, all CSRD applicants must attend a data retreat.

The Changing Role of School and District Leaders

Facilitators:
Wende Allen, New England Comprehensive Assistance Center
Roy Dawson, Laboratory for Student Success (LSS)

Panelists:
James Gray, Staff Specialist, Challenge Schools, Maryland Department of Education
Joan Kozlovsky, Director, New American Schools
Mitzi Beach, Title I, U.S. Department of Education
Charles Laster, Title I, U.S. Department of Education

The main focus of this session on the changing role of school and district leaders was the importance of teamwork. Presenters asserted that district and school leaders must move from the old "top-down" approach to the new and emerging roles of collaborator, resource person, barrier mover, and facilitator.

Within the state of Maryland, the Maryland School Performance Process for Schools for Success must include the following:

- Standards
- Assessments
- Reporting out
- Rewards and sanctions
- A school improvement process

It was indicated that by 2003, all low-performing schools must be in a research-based design. To assist with this process, money is given by the state, and regional teams help districts and other partners provide technical assistance.

Presenters noted that consistency is very important. In fact, the state superintendent has been in service there since 1991.

The school must look at the change process:

- Collaboration and alignment
- Understanding the past and moving forward
- Collective and purposeful analysis of needs
- The need for "critical consumers"
- Accountability

The principal's role is one of being sophisticated about budgets and the analysis of data and of creating ownership of the improvement process among the staff members. Having staff buy-in and a shared vision is crucial. Also of primary concern is the need for building capacity and creating teacher leaders.

Extended Learning Opportunities

Facilitators:
Deborah Banks, North Center Regional Education Laboratory (NCREL)
Wendy Russell, Region III Comprehensive Center

Panelists:
N. Andrew Overstreet, Superintendent of Schools, Danville Public Schools, Virginia
Suzanne Jones, Principal, Schoolfield Elementary, Danville, Virginia
Robert Stonehill, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, U.S. Department of Education

Are you looking for ways to increase the amount of learning time in your school or district? Time in school represents only nine percent of a child's life to age 18. What about the other 91 percent? The school building can be the center of your community, yet most are not utilized outside traditional school days and hours.

This session offered personal experience in extending the school year as a means to increasing learning for children and adults during non-traditional school hours. This includes before- and after-school time, and the concept is aimed at closing the gap that looms when children are out of school for a period of time.

Year-round program benefits include the following:

- Continuous improvement
- Higher student achievement
- Opportunities for acceleration
- Improved attendance and work habits
- Cost-effective implementation
- Constant opportunity to close the achievement gap

Schoolfield Elementary School was the first school in Virginia to offer 40 extra days of school throughout the year for either remediation or enrichment. The 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, was presented as a source of funding to provide enhanced learning opportunities for before- and after-school programs, Saturday academies, and summer sessions. Participants in this session discussed the impact more time in school had on the parents, teachers, students, and community.

Session outcomes included the following:

- An understanding of the role time plays in teaching children
- An opportunity to hear about a successful extended-year program
- Ideas concerning ways to increase student learning time
- The knowledge of the challenges of starting non-traditional school hours programs

Comments From Conference Participants

"If we are going to meet the goal of having all students read and do basic math by the end of third grade, we have to consider some creative solutions that have previously been considered 'impossible.'"

"I liked Hugh Burkett's speech: anyone can succeed! Give them a chance."

"I received helpful information concerning new ways to look at the reallocation of time and money to best meet the professional development component of reform."

"Very informative! Excellent sharing of great experiences!"

"The best piece was getting to know the state department people from my state and learning about what is involved in serving low-performing schools."

"Research-based instructional practices are key!"

"The presentation on using data at the classroom level was excellent because it dramatized the need for the state-district-school-classroom-student to share in the implementation of a system that involves everyone in using data."

"We must encourage states and districts to work together with schools to support improvement. Schools cannot do this alone."

"I am re-energized, re-vitalized to continue my relentless pursuit of excellence for all children."

"In my efforts toward low-performing schools, I will focus more on parent/community involvement to help promote student achievement."

"I appreciate Hugh Burkett's inspiring reminders to us about our 'will.' His remarks were worth the cross-country trip! Thank you."

"I don't believe my approach will change but my ability to lead will be enhanced. I received valuable new information from the presenters. I also received written materials that I believe will prove helpful to many of my staff members."

"It was affirming and rejuvenating. It was a great recharge in this very difficult and beneficial work called school reform."

"I will learn more about the Title I funds available to my school and to contact our local hospital to determine what intervention they provide to parents of newborns."

"This conference provided information to carry back to my state to continue to encourage more collaboration among federal programs."

"I am going to take the data retreats idea and rework it to fit my state."

"I am a new state-level employee working with CSRD. This was a wonderful opportunity to gain a greater national, state, and district perspective about the work I am about to do."

"It affirmed the need to work with district offices and not just schools if change is really going to occur and be sustained."

"I made new personal contacts and obtained valuable information and resources that can be used to enhance our current strategies across all the components of school improvement."

"Inspired me to continue to dream of high achievement."

"It will serve as a reference of the number of dedicated people and states that share a common goal of turning around low-performing schools."

"This conference provided the opportunity to compare notes with other states that already have 'intervention teams' in place."

"Hugh Burkett's speech was the highlight of this conference for me! It was a wonderful example of how high expectations can make a difference. Teachers can be those role models with high expectations for kids."

"The state planning session was the most worthwhile for me—to gather around with the ideas presented at the conference and then translate them into activities that we can do in our state."

"We started a dialogue here on 'what do we need to do better as a state?'"

"The session on collecting data was particularly informative with very good content. I work at a technical assistance center, and I will implement the information from this session at a retreat we're putting on this summer."

"This conference offered an excellent opportunity to refresh prior learning and to get excited again about making a difference in low-performing schools."

The Summer Institute Planning Committee

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Resource List

For more information:

Title I -
http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/CEP

Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program -
http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/compreform

Reading Excellence Program -
http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/REA

21st Century Community Learning Centers Program -
http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/21stcclc

Standards, Assessments, and Accountability -
http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/saa

Regional Educational Laboratories Network -
http://www.relnetwork.org

Comprehensive Regional Assistance Centers -
http://www.ed.gov/EdRes/EdFed/EdTechCtrs.html

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