Strengthening School Leadership in Wisconsin: The Wallace Initiative to Advance an Aligned System of Leader Development and Build Leadership for Learning in Wisconsin High Schools

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"The average reading ability for fourth- and eighth-grade black students in Wisconsin is the lowest of any state, and the reading achievement gap between black students and white students in Wisconsin continues to be the worst in the nation."

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, 2007

The State of Wisconsin has been working with the Wallace (Reader's Digest) Foundation to address pervasive achievement gaps in Wisconsin's urban schools through school leadership development since 2005. This paper provides on overview of the work being undertaken in the grant, whose partners include the State Department of Public Instruction, the five largest school districts in the state (Milwaukee, Madison, Racine, Kenosha, and Green Bay), the state's three research universities that have leadership preparation programs (University of Wisconsin-Madison, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and Cardinal Stritch University) and the Association of Wisconsin School Administrators. The paper also provides initial findings from some of the research being undertaken in conjunction with the grant related to building leadership for learning in Wisconsin urban high schools.

Wallace I (2005-2008): The Wisconsin Urban Schools Leadership Project

In 2005, the Wallace Foundation awarded the State of Wisconsin a three-year grant to define and document the characteristics of urban school leaders that have successfully addressed achievement gaps and significantly improved performance for all students. The project was designed to inform the ongoing development of the state's Master Educator License for administrators, by defining what is unique about urban school leadership and by documenting the work of highly effective urban principals.

In the grant, sixty exceptional urban school principals worked in cohort groups with faculty from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and Cardinal Stritch University to define and document mastery in urban school leadership. Through the project, urban schools were understood to be unique due to the *magnitude, urgency, and complexity* of the problems that they face (Wallace Fellows, 2007).

Further, the project characterized effective urban principals as leaders who build a common vision of equity and excellence in student learning that is shared by all members of the school community. Schools that close achievement gaps and advance learning for all students shared a common cognitive framework for decision-making that includes:

- a shared vision and commitment to advancing learning for all students,
- a commitment to defining vision gaps by analyzing data related to school inputs, processes, and outcomes;

- adoption of evidence-based plans that address the vision gaps identified in the data analysis;
- evaluation of the effectiveness of school programs, processes, and plans through assessment of results in terms of value added to student learning;
- reflection on value added results to refine goals and plans to continuously advance student learning.

Effective urban principals are strong communicators and change agents who advance equity and excellence in student learning by building teacher capacity, aligning resources with the vision; and building and engaging parents and community members (Kelley & Shaw, 2009, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2008a).

The Wisconsin Master Educator Assessment Process (WMEAP) further defined mastery in educational leadership on four critical domains:

1. The principal as an advocate for high levels of student learning
2. The principal as a skilled communicator and change agent
3. The principal as a leader in building community
4. The principal as a skilled organizational leader

These domains of leadership were elaborated by the master urban principals in the Wallace grant in a publication entitled *Voices from Wisconsin Wallace Fellows, 2005-2008* (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2008). The *Voices* document defines principal behavior in each of these four domains, and makes recommendations for broader system supports to advance principal leadership for learning, including the ways in which teachers and staff, the district central office, the state, and the community can provide support to advance student learning.

Based on their work with these 60 master principals, the Wallace project partners made several recommendations regarding the Master Educator Assessment Process:

- The Wisconsin Master Educator Assessment Process is important *professional development* for school leaders;
- A *site visit* should be added to the assessment process for the state's master administrator license because it provides an opportunity to assess leadership in context, and to assess the extent to which the leader's vision is embodied in teaching practice and embraced throughout the school;
- The assessment process should be designed so that *cohorts* of principals can work together with experts in the development of their portfolio of work;
- The significant time investment needed to develop a meaningful portfolio of work suggests the importance of *financial or other incentives* for undertaking or successfully completing the WMEAP assessment process.

<u>Wallace II (2008-2010): Building an Aligned System of Leadership Development in Wisconsin</u>

Based on the success of the initial project, in 2008, the Wallace Foundation invited the state to apply for an additional two-year grant to support the advancement of an aligned system of leader development in the state. The state, district, university and association

partners involved in the project identified strengthening high school leadership for learning as an important area of leadership development that could anchor this broader effort to strengthen an aligned system of leadership for learning in the state. Similar to the achievement gap cited above for Wisconsin students in fourth and eighth grade, the high school achievement/attainment gap in Wisconsin is among the highest in the nation. In 2005, the graduation rate for white students in Wisconsin was an impressive 85.5%, while the graduation rates for Wisconsin African American, Hispanic and Native American Students lagged behind at 43.9%, 48.0%, and 48.3% (Editorial Projects in Education, 2008).

Achievement gaps are particularly problematic in urban schools, and so, in 2008, the Wisconsin Wallace Grant proposed a project that would align and connect university, district, association, and state partner school leadership development efforts across the stages of leader development. These include the development of teacher leadership, recruitment, preparation, and placement, induction, mentoring and coaching, professional development, supervision and evaluation. In addition to their significant achievement gap issues, high schools were identified as an important focus for leadership development due to the size and complexity of the high school organization, particularly the comprehensive urban high school. High schools also face unique challenges in leadership development, since they typically hire administrators with some administrative experience at the elementary or middle school level, or with experience as an assistant principal at the high school level. Thus, despite the significant challenge and complexity of the high school principalship, new high school principals receive limited mentoring for their roles because they are viewed as experienced administrators.

Thus, the grant partners worked with the Wallace Foundation to design the new grant to include attention to building an aligned system of leadership development, informed by job-embedded professional development for high school principals to build leadership capacity in their schools. The grant provides funds for faculty from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and Cardinal Stritch University to work with 2-6 comprehensive high schools in each of five Wisconsin urban school districts (Milwaukee, Madison, Kenosha, Green Bay, and Racine) to build leadership for learning by developing leadership around the advancement of a learning initiative.

Comprehensive urban high schools face special challenges due to the magnitude and complexity of the problems they face. They include some of the largest, most challenged schools in the state, and they contribute to the significant achievement gaps between African American and white students described above.

The high school leadership team effort is designed to inform the broader effort to develop an aligned system of leader development in the state. Wisconsin is a promising state for strengthening alignment because of the PI 34 tiered licensure system already in place, anchored in a vision of mastery in educational leadership. The grant provides support for the documentation and development of an assessment toolkit for principals, districts, universities, and the state to support alignment efforts.

High School Leadership for Learning Teams

The Wallace grant focuses on the development of university/school partnerships to support job-embedded leader development through site-based high school leadership teams that are organically constructed to include leaders at various stages of their careers, such as an aspiring leader, a pre-service field placement, an assistant principal, and the principal. The goal is to strengthen the pipeline for leadership development at the high school level, and to strengthen learning outcomes and address achievement gaps in Wisconsin high schools. Through the grant, university facilitators work with high school principals and leadership teams to analyze data, assess learning gaps, and work together to implement an initiative to advance student learning at the high school level.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison is working with six comprehensive urban high schools to support and strengthen leadership for learning teams. For the UW-Madison, this effort has focused on working to establish a leadership for learning community of practice (Wenger, 2002) in the leadership team. These teams have evolved differently in the different university/school partnership groups, but the focus in the UW-Madison partnerships has been on building a community of practice to support the instructional leadership of the department chairs, led by the principal and other school-wide instructional leaders.

We have done this by observing leadership team meetings, and by serving as a consultant providing advice and formative feedback to principals and other school leaders to guide and support leadership development at the school level. We have also provided, participated in, or observed professional development sessions (typically two to three half-day sessions in each school in the first academic year) to help department chairs revision their role as instructional leaders, and provide the tools and training necessary for them to understand and carry out this role.

Department Chair as Instructional Leader

Principals are often thought of as the sole instructional leader in schools (Barnett & Aagaard, 2007). Yet, the task of enhancing a school's instructional capacity to improve student achievement is increasingly being viewed as simply too complex and overwhelming a job for a single leader. This inability to provide effective instructional leadership is due in large part to distractions associated with non-instructional issues (Barnett & Aagaard, 2007; Chrispeels, Burke, Johnson, & Daly, 2008; Copland & Boatright, 2006; Fink & Resnick, 2001; Fullan, 2002; Lambert, 2002; Portin, 2000; Resnick & Glennan, 2002; Supovitz & Poglinco, 2001). In complex urban high schools, these distractions tend to be even more disruptive, resulting in even less instructional leadership being provided by principals (Portin, 2000; Resnick & Glennan, 2002).

The extensive, though relatively recent, body of research on teacher leadership (Barth, 2007; Crowther, 2009; Harris, 2003b; Lambert, 2003; York-Barr & Duke, 2004) provides compelling incentives for principals to look within their organizations for assistance. Harris (2003a) suggested that if schools are to cope with the current and future challenges, they must generate the "leadership capacity of the many rather than the few"

(p. 5). This approach, she argued, is a "fundamental reconceptualisation of leadership as a form of social capital which, if distributed or shared, has the greatest potential to contribute to sustained school development and improvement" (p. 5).

While a great deal of research has focused on principal instructional leadership, and the instructional leadership of teacher leaders such as instructional coaches (Mangin, & Stoelinga, 2008), much less attention has been given to the affordances of such leadership being exhibited by academic department chairs. Weiler (2001) referred to the department chair as "the most underutilized position" (p.1), and suggested that chairs are potentially the most influential people in well-organized high schools. In his research on effective department chairs, Nelson (2004) determined that chairs are the "unsung heroes" of school improvement who are at the frontline of complex change in high schools. Nelson also found that, in comprehensive high schools, effective department-level leadership is critical to improvement and to the implementation of reforms. Wetterson (1992), in conducting multiple case studies of department chairs, found that their position provided chairs the opportunity to influence curriculum and instruction within their own departments as well as promoting ideas for school improvement across the wider school context. Wetterson also found that teachers are more likely to perceive their department chairs, rather than their principals, as the schools' instructional leaders. Given the important role departments play in influencing the work of teachers within them (Harris, 2001; Hill, 1995; Little, 1995; Nelson, 2004; Siskin & Little, 1995), department chairs clearly have an important role to play in converting the aspirations embedded in the school's mission, vision and values into the reality of daily classroom practice and school improvement efforts.

High school department chairs are also typically members of leadership teams. While the compositions and responsibilities of leadership teams may differ between schools, it is clear they have the potential to play a key role in the manifestation of successful school improvement efforts (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). As noted by Chrispeels, Burke, Johnson, and Daly (2008), "There is a growing recognition that principals cannot lead alone and that school leadership teams are essential to the improvement process" (p. 730).

Members of these teams also benefit from their participation within them. West-Burnham (2004) suggested that teams are the most powerful way to develop leadership capacity, describing them as "nurseries where participants are provided with numerous opportunities to learn and develop leadership skills in a safe and supportive environment" (p. 5). West-Burnham further described teams as "both a powerful vehicle for effective leadership and one of the most effective and fertile contexts for learning" (p. 5). Wenger's (1998) community of practice perspective also provides a useful lens for viewing leadership teams as venues for mutual growth and learning around a shared set of leadership practices.

With a strong connection to both school-wide policy and vision, and to the realities of the daily life of teachers, the department, the classroom, and students, department chairs are in a position to play an important role in advancing instructional effectiveness. In

addition, the department chair's role as a content expert provides an important complement to the principal's role as instructional leader. Nelson et al. (2007) refer to the knowledge base combining leadership skills and content knowledge ("leadership content knowledge") to define the features of leadership that enable school leaders to monitor and support specialized content-based pedagogy. Because department chairs are content experts, they play an important role informing and focusing content-specific instructional leadership.

Research Questions

Our work with the high school leadership teams has focused on building the leadership for learning by supporting the principal in developing their department chairs as instructional leaders. In this paper, we examine the answers to the following questions, based on our research and experience in the high schools we are working with:

(1) What is the role of the principal in advancing leadership for learning through leadership teams in the comprehensive high school?
(2) What barriers and enabling conditions exist in building leadership for learning in high school leadership teams?
(3) What does the role of department chair as instructional leader look like in comprehensive urban high schools, and what impact does a redefined chair's role have in supporting a focus on student learning?

We examine these questions by first considering our experience across the six schools involved in the Wallace grant, and then by examining in more depth the case of one of the six schools in relation to their work under the grant to build leadership capacity to advance student learning. While the stories of the schools continue to unfold, we hope that this examination provides a window into our early experiences with the grant, and the potential for school/university partnerships to support high schools in building leadership that can close achievement gaps and advance learning for all students.

District and School Context

The six schools that are the focus of this study were located in two urban districts. While the districts varied in terms of capacity, resources, and history, they also had important features in common. Both districts experienced a change in district leadership at the beginning of the grant period, bringing in a new superintendent from outside. Thus, both districts were in transition to new leadership throughout the project. The UW-Madison faculty involved in the partnership had prior relationships with personnel in both districts, as well as with staff in five of the six schools, and four of the six principals. Thus, an advantage to this partnership was that it required limited time to build relationships and trust in some of the sites.

All six principals were experienced school leaders. At the start of the 2008-09 academic year, the principals had zero to five years of experience as a high school principal. Four of the six had previously worked as principal at another level (elementary or middle school), and the other two were promoted from within their high school.

All of the high schools were characterized by high levels of economic and racial diversity, including growing populations of low income and English Language Learner populations. Two of the six had particularly strong reputations for their ability to produce nationally recognized scholars. For these schools, increasing diversity and increasing attention to subgroup achievement gaps were raising awareness and concern about the school's ability to serve all students effectively. For the other four schools, the struggle to improve achievement for low income and minority youth was a longstanding and pervasive issue. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction had identified five of the six schools as Schools in Need of Improvement under the No Child Left Behind Act for failing to meet Annual Yearly Progress Goals under the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

The principals all had a long term vision of strengthening student achievement in their schools, which was supported and reinforced by their participation in the project. All six principals faced periodic significant disruptions (some might say standard operating procedure) characteristic of the urban high school (e.g., student behavioral and personal crises; safety issues including fights, weapons, drugs, personal threats, bomb threats; parent/community issues; teacher personnel issues; administrative turnover; implementation of new district initiatives). The principal who was in his first year was committed to strengthening instructional leadership, but building trust, establishing norms and expectations, and maintaining control took priority over the grant initiative.

First Year Implementation

In the first year of the Leadership for Learning Team initiative (2008-09) the university partners worked with principals to identify a focal leadership team. Each school had two existing teams in common: the department chairs (led by the principal and typically including department chairs, guidance and counseling, and any instructional coach or assistant principal for instruction), and the administrative team (led by the principal and typically including four assistant/associate principals). In each of the six schools partnering with UW-Madison faculty, the initial focus was on strengthening the role of department chair as instructional leader. Department chairs were selected for initial focus due to their unique position between administration and their direct connection and potential to influence instruction in the classroom.

A typical process involved collaboration between the University team and principal or principal and instructional team to:

- build an understanding of school context;
- clarify the focus and purpose of the Wallace Grant;
- build a shared vision and trust in the department chair leadership team;
- redefine the role of department chair as instructional leader;
- identify a specific instructional goal or initiative for the leadership team to work on;
- build the skills of the leadership team to carry out their new role by advancing the instructional goal or initiative;

- identify leadership opportunities for strengthening the leadership for learning initiative (such as building and aligning the instructional leadership role of the administrative team); and
- strategically plan further implementation for the second year of the grant.

In the process of transforming the leadership teams, the department chairs demonstrated a heightened awareness of their schools' achievement gaps as well as the structures, instructional practices, and beliefs that contribute to them. As the leadership teams matured, they became communities of practice, with team members increasingly trusting and supporting one another. The teams grew in their understanding and expectations about the role that they could and should play as instructional leaders. Over time, teams and individuals also became more engaged, empowered and responsible for the learning of adults and students within their schools.

While these gains were heartening to principals, district leaders, research team members, and other stakeholders, we would be remiss if we did not describe some of the challenges which emerged as a result of concerns expressed by the department chairs. In fact, responding to these concerns provided much of the focus of the professional development in the first year.

In addition to performing a role already fraught with ambiguity (Zapeda & Kruskamp, 2007) and strain (Bredeson, 1993), the department chairs had concerns about the change in their roles. The concerns-based adoption model developed by Hord and her colleagues (1987) provides a useful framework for understanding the evolution of the project during the first year. Hord and her colleagues suggested that "the single most important factor in any change process is the people who will be most affected by the change" (p. 29). The Concerns-Based Adoption Model's dimensions of self, task, and impact, are classified into seven stages of concern as illustrated below:

Table 1. Concerns-Based Adoption Model Dimensions

Dimensions	Stages of Concern
Self	Awareness, Informational, Personal
Task	Management
Impact	Consequence, Collaboration, Refocusing

(Adapted from Hord et al., 1987, p. 31)

The model suggests that although individuals may have concerns in each stage of the model, their concerns generally progress from stage to stage as the implementation moves forward. In this first year, the department chairs' concerns were primarily associated with the self and task dimensions. In the initial stages of the professional development, the chairs were concerned about issues pertaining to themselves. Concerns were at first heightened when they became aware of the achievement gaps during data retreats (awareness). Following this, the chairs wanted to know what the data from their departments looked like and what would be expected of them as instructional leaders (informational). Once the chairs were satisfied that they understood what was being asked of them, their thoughts, and the focus of the professional development, turned to

the skills they might need for leading instructional reform within their departments (personal). Though such concerns varied in concert with the teams' existing capacities, leadership team meetings primarily focused on developing skills related to facilitating effective meetings, team building, data analysis, school improvement planning and the principles of effective instruction.

At the end of the first year, most of the leadership teams were situated in the task domain. Looking ahead to the second year of the initiative, we anticipate that the department chairs' concerns related to self and task will be replaced by a focus on issues related to the implementation of initiatives to advance teaching and learning at the school and department levels. We further anticipate that teachers within each of these departments will have concerns related to possible changes, for which professional support will need to be provided to the department chairs. The position of the schools in relation to the CBAM model are summarized in Table 2, which shows that after the first year, the schools represented a range of implementation levels.

Table 2. First Year Wallace Grant CBAM Accomplishments, Enabling Conditions, and Barriers to Building a Strong Instructional Leadership Team

	First Year Accomplishments	Key Enablers	Key Barriers
High End Implementation Schools	Chairs developed awareness of achievement gaps, refined their vision for the schools, and became aware of the potential to address achievement gaps through a redefined chair role (both their role as *individual leaders* in their departments, and as a *leadership team*) Chairs identified learning needs and began to build capacity as a team and as individual leaders to carry out new leadership role Chairs embraced new leadership role. Some began to implement new role with more complete roll out planned for 2009-10	Principal Interest and Commitment Strong Commitment of Leadership Team Grant funds to buy days away for Leadership Team development Presence of Wallace University Partners to support principals in implementation (strategy, resources, legitimacy from external experts) and hold principals accountable for maintaining a focus on leadership for learning District relationship and support in terms of data analysis, content experts, and support for the concept Competing priorities managed or aligned	School Context (e.g., norms around traditional department chair role, level of trust between "management" and "labor") Tension between the need to be responsive to district coherence (centralized leadership/vision) versus teacher leadership/initiative (decentralized leadership/vision) viewed as an impediment

		Competing disruptions managed	
Mid-Level Implementation Schools	Chairs developed awareness of achievement gaps, refined their vision for the schools, and became aware of the potential to address achievement gaps through a redefined chair role (both their role as *individual leaders* in their departments, and as a *leadership team*) Chairs identified learning needs to carry out new leadership role	Principal Interest and Commitment Grant funds to buy days away for Leadership Team development Presence of Wallace University Partners to support principals in implementation (strategy, resources, legitimacy from external experts) and hold principals accountable for maintaining a focus on leadership for learning	Competing Priorities and Disruptions School Context (e.g., norms around traditional department chair role, level of trust between "management" and "labor") Tension between the need to be responsive to district coherence (centralized leadership/vision) versus teacher leadership/initiative (decentralized leadership/vision) viewed as a barrier
Low Level Implementation Schools	Chairs developed awareness of the leadership for learning initiative, and the concept of a redefined role of department chair as instructional leader. Concerns were expressed about learning needs. Principals were aware of achievement gaps, and are planning for further implementation of the leadership initiative in 2009-10.	Principal Interest Grant funds provided resources to buy personnel and days away for Leadership Team development	Leadership focused on managing disruptions Competing Priorities Union Concerns and History District constraints on subs and union contract impeded time for leadership team development

A critical enabling condition that advanced leadership in the high end implementation schools was the strong commitment of the principal to implement the leadership for learning initiative. Other enabling conditions included the importance of grant funds to buy time for leadership team development and the presence of the university partners to hold schools accountable for maintaining a focus on leadership for learning.

The most common barrier to advancing the theory of action was the presence of competing priorities, and the principal's perceived need to prioritize and address emerging crises over the instructional leadership initiative. Despite the fact that the six schools were located in two school districts, so multiple schools were relating to the same district, the role of the school district, the role of teacher's union, and the perception of their impact in supporting or impeding the leadership reform, varied from school to school. The differences depended in part on how the initiative played out in each school, and where points of contention/support naturally emerged, as well as in the relationship between the principal, the district, and union leadership, and the principal's response to potential points of conflict.

In the next section, we examine one of the high implementation schools in greater depth. While this school had a unique culture and context, the response among teacher leaders was similar to the positive response and interest teacher leaders expressed in each school we worked with in building department chairs as stronger instructional leaders. Thus, we view this school as a potential model to illustrate how a principal might go about changing cultural norms and role definitions to advance leadership for learning in a comprehensive high school.

School A1: Penant Hills High School

Penant Hills High School is a large urban high school of about 2000 students located in the Wentworth Falls School District (WFSD). WFSD is located in a city of approximately 220,000 residents. It is generally viewed a successful school district, with substantial numbers of high performing students, innovative teaching practices and progressive approaches to educating students with special needs. Yet, the district has a growing population of traditionally underprivileged students who do not enjoy the same level of success as their white, and economically advantaged peers.

WFSD applied for, and, in 2008, received two grants which provided financial resources, additional staff and external expertise to remedy the inequities. One grant was from the US Department of Education. The chief aim of this grant was to improve relationships, engagement and learning for all students through the implementation of small learning communities in its high schools. Commensurate with the ideals of small learning communities, WFSD developed three specific goals for each of its high schools related to the grant. The goals were to increase the graduation rate, improve relationships, and increase post-secondary opportunities for all students. The second grant was from the Wallace Foundation (described above); it paid for university support for developing the instructional capacity of the leadership team, and provided the school with $10,000 to be used however they wanted. The principal at Penant Hills used the money from the Wallace Grant to renovate a room into a professional meeting space for instructional collaboration. Staff members may use the room only if they are meeting with more than one person to discuss instruction-related issues.

The student body at Penant Hills consists of about 50% White, 25% African American, and 25% Hispanic and Asian students, split about evenly. The school's leadership

recognizes the importance of addressing persistent achievement gap issues that exist in the school, and has established a goal of strengthening teacher leadership to advance learning goals. Typical of many urban high schools, Penant Hills has historically had a centralized leadership structure, with teacher isolation and strong industrial-style unionism norms in the school. In their traditional role, the Department Chair served as a communication vehicle, scheduler, budget manager, and subject matter liaison to district discussions of curriculum. While taking care of these administrative tasks, the Department Chairs have not seen themselves, or been viewed by their peers, to serve as instructional leaders.

Table 3 summarizes formal meetings that took place during the 2008-09 academic year to build the capacity of the leadership team and to redefine the role of department chair as instructional leader. The table shows key strategies used by the principal to build the leadership team. These included: building trust; modeling effective leadership behaviors; establishing shared goals for student learning; building a personal vision and a shared vision and formally defining the role of department chair as instructional leader; building, motivating, and committing the team; building a strong foundational knowledge base; and providing low stakes opportunities to practice leadership skills. These activities were undertaken in skill development loops, revisiting developmental areas but each time pushing for greater depth of commitment, understanding, and experience.

Table 3. Penant Hills Leadership Team - Summary of Year 1 Meetings

Date	Event	Agenda
8/20/08	DCLT* Retreat	Establish Shared Vision
9/5/08	Union Leadership	Principal met with union leadership to share vision of Dept Chair as Instructional Leader
9/10/08	DCLT Meeting	- Define Shared Values - Review Research on Professional Community
9/24/08	DCLT Meeting	Agenda Postponed Due to Low Attendance by Department Chairs
10/15/08	DCLT Meeting	- Review Learning Goals established on 8/10/08 - Discuss Research on Professional Community - Assign Review of Data on Student Engagement
11/10/08	DCLT Meeting	- Team Building: Share a song that reflects Department - Introduce District Teaching and Learning Staff as Dept Chair Resource
11/19/08	DCLT Meeting	Chairs read and discuss two short articles on instructional leadership
12/3/08	DCLT Retreat	- Team Building Tribes Activities (2 hours) - Review and provide feedback on draft definition of department chair as instructional leader (developed by principal) - Build Vision Statement for the School - Draft Statements of Department Chair's Personal Vision for their Department

12/17/08	DCLT Meeting	- Distributed Leadership Task: Department Chairs discuss issue of students walking halls during club time, and are asked to take the issue to their departments for ideas for resolution - Celebration of First Semester Success: Chairs share a story of their leadership the first semester - Team Building: Share a family holiday tradition
1/5-6/09	Individual Meetings with Department Chairs	Principal holds individual meetings with each department chair to check understanding and commitment to instructional leadership
1/7/09	DCLT Retreat	- Team Building: Follow up – DC's asked to bring an artifact to share with a story about their holiday - Revisit and Recommit to Vision - Define Spring Semester DCLT Agenda that will provide skill set needed to begin instructional leadership role in August, 2009 - Leading Meeting skills - Data Analysis Skills - Building Collaborative Team Skills - Instructional Leadership Skills
1/28/09	DCLT Meeting	Skill Building: Leading Meeting Skills
2/11/09	DCLT Meeting	Skill Building: Leading Meeting Skills
2/25/09	DCLT Meeting	Skill Building: Building Collaborative Team Skills
3/25/09	DCLT Meeting	Skill Building: Building Collaborative Team Skills
4/15/09	DCLT Meeting	Skill Building: Planning for Continuous Improvement
4/28/09	DCLT Meeting (Optional)	Education Trust Webinar featuring two high schools that have closed achievement gaps
4/29/09	DCLT Meeting	Skill Building: Action Planning
5/13/09	DCLT Meeting	Skill Building: Leading Analysis of Data
5/27/09	DCLT Meeting	Skill Building: Instructional Leadership
6/18-19/09	Admin Team Retreat	- Define Individual and Team Instructional Leadership Roles for Admin Team - Identify ways to carry out summer admin tasks in role of instructional leaders

*DCLT is the Department Chair Leadership Team

The development of department chairs as instructional leaders was an amazing journey through this first year. It would be difficult to fully capture the difference between the chairs at the beginning and end of the year, but some key differences were the level of trust and community among the chairs; their willingness to turn to one another to solve problems; their commitment to practicing effective leadership behaviors. Early in the year, the chairs were suspect of the role redefinition; at the end of the year, the meetings were transformed, and the chairs not only accepted, but embraced their redefined role. The transformation is consistent with the difference Wageman et al (2008) note about the

difference between a senior leadership team in name only, and a "real" leadership team, summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Effective Leadership Teams

Team in name only:	***Real Leadership Team:***
Team Meetings:	*Team Meetings:*
- This is a distraction from real work	- This is Vital Work
- You "should" attend	- You *want* to attend
- You look for ways to send a substitute	- If you can't be there, you trust the Team members to represent your concerns.
- You can't wait for it to end	- You feel productive and energized
Between Meetings:	*Between Meetings:*
- Your peers feel irrelevant	- You solve problems jointly w/peers
- You avoid your peers or collude	- You manage team accountabilities with peers
- You rely on the leader to integrate	- You integrate yourselves

Source: Wageman, Nunes, Burruss & Hackman. (2008). Senior Leadership Teams: What It Takes to Make Them Great. Harvard Business School Press.

The case of Penant Hills provides an illustration of the role that the principal can play in advancing leadership for learning through leadership teams in the comprehensive high school. Factors that significantly supported the principal's success included the *availability of resources* to buy time away for the department chairs to develop as a team, *the principal's strong commitment* to building a leadership for learning team, which was reflected in his ongoing effort to nurture, build, support, and model effective leadership for the team, and hold team members accountable for their commitment to building leadership for learning. Having said that, what struck the university partners was the way in which department chairs initially questioned, but ultimately fully embraced their redefined role.

Barriers to building an effective leadership for learning team include traditional models of chair selection, the ability to bring teachers along to accept the chairs as instructional leaders, attention to the commitment and support of other key leadership and stakeholder groups, such as the administrative team, and teachers not involved in the leadership team.

The definition adopted by the Penant Hills Leadership Team to capture the role of Department Chair as instructional leader is shown in Figure 1. As the definition evolved, it became more specific. In its current form, it provides guidance about how to approach the four key elements of the role of department chair as instructional leader.

The redefined chair's role has the potential to significantly advance the focus on student learning. The goal for 2009-10 is to begin the year with the chairs implementing their

instructional leadership role in their departments. Thus far, the task and self phases of the CBAM model have been successfully implemented, with the implementation phase set into motion, but not fully underway. The fruits of a redefined role in terms of leadership that connects the school goals and vision to student learning have not yet been realized. Next year will provide new opportunities and obstacles as the chairs work to extend the leadership team's vision of a staff fully engaged in instructional improvement a reality.

The work thus far also suggests an important role for the university in helping to maintain a focus on building instructional leadership capacity in the school, and can provide an objective external voice, bringing resources and ideas to support the principal in carrying out his or her role in keeping instructional leadership at the forefront of a complex and chaotic system. The university provides a resource and accountability for principals who otherwise might allow the hectic pace of high school leadership to overwhelm their efforts to advance an instructional vision.

Strengthening leadership for learning at the school level creates opportunities for conflicts with the district, as district initiatives to create coherence and alignment across schools at times is in conflict with the efforts of the individual school to encourage leadership initiative among department chairs. Particularly at the early stages of leadership development, when department chairs are testing their new role, attention to managing conflicts is critical. Building the personal and professional relationships between chairs and district personnel facilitates this transition, and makes district administrators more aware of potential areas of perceived conflict between school and district leadership.

Figure 1. Penant Hills High School
Department Leader Definition

Department Chair Role:
To this point, the role of department chair has been more about representation than leadership. In the past, it has been to run your department, to come together as department chairs occasionally to provide feedback to the principal on different ideas being presented. Today you are being asked to shift to a leadership role in which you continue to effectively manage the department but that management becomes secondary to the role of being an instructional leader. This document seeks to better define your role as instructional leader.

Four Elements of Instructional Leadership:

1. Facilitate the Development of a shared department vision and mission
2. Collect and use data to identify goals, reflect upon instructional effectiveness and promote professional learning.
3. Facilitate a system that ensures alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessment.
4. Promote continuous and sustainable improvement.

- Facilitate the Development of a Shared Department & Mission:

"Create a department that works toward a common goal."

1. Develop a shared vision for the department aligned with the school vision that is student centered.
2. Work with colleagues to identify core values and create a foundation of understanding that allows the department to have basis from which to make informed decisions about course offereings, staff development, and instructional practice.
3. Seek support from building and/or supervising principal to coordinate facilitated dialogue and gain an understanding of school vision in a way that gives you confidence in working with colleagues to create a vision that is aligned.

- Collect and use data to identify goals, reflect upon instructional effectiveness and promote professional learning

1. Identify data aligned with department and school vision.
2. Work with building and/or supervising principal to thoroughly understand data set and its importance to develop effective ways of using data to promote professional learning.
3. Create clearly defined goals for student learning that are based on the assumption that changes in adult instructional practice will improve student learning.
4. Create a culture in the department of professionalism such that teachers actively seek data regarding student achievement to inform their instruction.
5. The department leaders' role here is not to make data evaluative. Rather it is to make data an integral tool in the development of professional learning. Think supportive, not evaluative.

- Facilitate a system that assures alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessment

1. Students deserve to know there is an aligned curriculum – it's not a lottery as to academic outcomes. At the end of the day – it's a value of saying, "What students deserve"
2. Work with building principal and/or supervising principal to develop curriculum in the department that is aligned horizontally and vertically and is congruent with district vision for the curricular area.
3. Develop system of monitoring for alignment via assessment, collaboration and professional development.
4. Note a significant distinction: When there are teachers in your department who are not engaging in the process, that IS administration. Your role is to support the teachers who are willing.

- Promote continuous and sustainable improvement

1. Improvements must be living and addressed regularly (start each dept meting with it)
2. Reevaluate and evaluate on a regular basis with specialists
3. Focus goals to a couple (1-2) – make it/them bite-size
4. Work between departments on common goals to help address big picture

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