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Gene's Corner: "The Administrator Challenge"

The demands placed on school administrators are as great as at any other time. With the very public strain put on each administrator – as demonstrated by the AYP reports published in local and national media and continued calls for accountability and reform – it must feel as though administrators are on a high-stakes reality TV show. And it takes a lot to be successful.

Look at the case of Roy Romer. In July 2000, this former three-term governor of the state of Colorado and vocal advocate of public education was hired by the Los Angeles Unified School District to turn that district around. A politician with a storied career, Romer is currently struggling to retain his job, as the Mayor of Los Angeles wants to claim the school district as an "educational failure" and take control of operations.

Running a successful school district requires more than some realize. It is not a job that simply requires vision and the ability to bring all stakeholders to the table. One must possess the political acumen and leadership skills of Winston Churchill, the strength of character of Rosa Parks, the compassion and organizational wisdom of Cesar Chavez, and the stamina of, well, Lance Armstrong. In this regard, the successful educational administrator probably more resembles a decathlete or heptathlete than a politician.

As with all great endeavors, achieving lofty goals takes training and at least a little help. That's where we come in. The Intermountain Center – along with each of its units – offers a variety of services that help administrators be more effective. From leadership training to program evaluation, from needs assessment to grant writing and professional development, there are many ways we can help make administrators' jobs easier.

You and your colleagues are working to ensure that the ultimate winners here are your students. Consider us a 'life line' to making that goal easier to reach.

Center for Professional Development Shaking Things Up! *Regional Coordinators, Needs Assessment Offer Customized Service*

The new Center for Professional Development within the Intermountain Center is taking some big steps to provide you and your colleagues with the quality services you need. Here are the latest improvements within the Center:

- **Regional Professional Development Coordinators** – Districts in Regions IV, V, and VI now have specific contacts to more personally meet their needs:

Region IV Coordinator: Ryan Witt – 282-4885; wittryan@isu.edu

Region V Coordinator: Precious Mudiwa – 282-5466; mudiprec@isu.edu

Region VI Coordinator: Ryan Leavitt – 282-3768; leavryan@isu.edu

Look for your region's coordinator at monthly superintendents' meetings and introduce yourself. They are there to help you!

- **Needs Assessments Under Way** – The Center has developed a new professional development needs assessment tool to assist schools in selecting the most valuable training for their staff. It can be administered face-to-face, via a paper and pencil survey, or electronically.

If you would like to have this survey administered to you and your colleagues, please contact the above-listed coordinator for your region, or call (208) 282-4312.

Effective Schools-IABE Conference a Success! *Hundreds from across the Region Participate*

The Center for Effective Schools, in collaboration with the League of Schools and the Idaho Association of Bilingual Educators (IABE), hosted an Intermountain Effective Schools Conference on October 6th. A group of over 400 educators participated in break out sessions which covered everything from yoga in the classroom and diversity to obesity in schools and brain-based learning.

Three ICEE staff members presented one or more sessions at this year's conference. Below is a list of Center staff members and the sessions presented by each:

- **Dr. Gene Davis** – “*Overview of Classroom Walk-Through Supervision,*” and “*Leadership in Our Schools: Tools for Administrators.*”
- **Precious Mudiwa** – “*Addressing Obesity in Our Schools.*”
- **Ryan Witt** – “*Quick and Easy Grant Writing,*” and “*An Overview of the High School Reform Movement.*”
- Members of the Center for Economic Education – Dr. Susan Jenkins, Janaan Haskell, and Tyler Telford – concurrently hosted an all-day Economic Education workshop.

If you would like to offer any or all of these workshops for professional development credit within your school or district – or if you would simply like more information about these offerings – please contact Dr. Susan Jenkins at (208) 282-4194 or jenksusa@isu.edu ; for educators in Regions IV, V, and VI, we strongly suggest contacting your professional development liason listed above.

Research in the Spotlight

A Synopsis of Current Research in Educational Leadership

- **Educational Leadership: *Facts and Myths*** – Recent studies by Educational Research Service and the Stanford Educational Leadership Institute provide a good deal of insight as to what is *thought* to be true about educational administrators, and what is, in fact, true.

In *Answering the Critics of School Administration: What are the Facts?*, authors John M. Forsyth and Jennifer R. Turner bring the facts to bear on six commonly-held misconceptions about school administration. Here are some selected myths:

Myth: There are too many administrators – Typically, administrators comprise less than 4% of all district personnel. Further, districts do their jobs with fewer management personnel than comparable organizations in other sectors.

Myth: Administration is an unnecessary burden on schools and should be curtailed – Research indicates that strong leadership by principals, superintendents, and the central office is crucial for effective schools.

Myth: A lot of money is going to administration that could be better spent for other purposes – Data show that only 6.2 percent of a district’s budget is earmarked for central office administration, and central office salaries only account for 2.2 percent of total district spending. And eliminating these positions would mean that important central office functions would go undone.

For more information on this study, visit www.ers.org .

- The School Leadership Study: Developing Successful Principals, conducted by the Stanford Educational Leadership Institute and commissioned by the Wallace Foundation, intends to “identify and replicate effective pre- and inservice programs and . . . structures that produce the most highly qualified school leaders.” As a starting point of the study, the researchers have published the findings of their literature review.

Here are the key facts:

1. Effective school leaders influence student achievement by supporting and developing quality teachers and by implementing optimal organizational processes.
2. The best leadership preparation programs have many common elements, including a basis in research, a coherent curriculum, opportunities for internships and other 'authentic' experience, and a cohort- or mentor-based structure.
3. While the general movement in the development of educational leaders has been to train them specifically within the educational context – rather than in general leadership competencies – many pathways currently exist to develop leaders. The relative effectiveness of each method (whether prospective principals are teachers with some leadership potential or are successful leaders in other fields, and whether they are trained in a more traditional university setting or, say, by a nonprofit organization in collaboration with school districts), however, has yet to be assessed.
4. Ideally, credentialing requirements and educational policies will be informed by current research and best practices within educational leadership preparation programs (mentioned above), and funding will be strategically routed to the proper activities.

Watch for more of this study as it is completed and published at www.wallacefoundation.org.

Partnerships

At present, the ICEE and its centers are collaborating with several regional school districts to meet specific needs. Davis County (UT), Dillon (MT), Cassia County (ID), Preston (ID), and Blackfoot (ID) school districts, as well as Declo Junior High School, are among those currently partnering with the Center for a variety of training sessions aimed at improving student achievement. And, to date, over 160 educators have completed Classroom Walk-Through training offered by ICEE staff.

If you would like your school or district to collaborate with the Intermountain Center to achieve your goals, contact Dr. Gene Davis at (208) 282-4443, Dr. Charles Zimmerly at (208) 282-5382, or Dr. Susan Jenkins at (208) 282-4194.

Have a question? Let us know! We're here to help you. Give us a call at (208) 282-4312, or send an email to Lori Medellin (medelori@isu.edu), Susan Jenkins (jenksusa@isu.edu), or Gene Davis (davie@isu.edu).