Backgrounder

Institute for Education Leadership’s Ontario School System Research Project

1. The Project

Early Beginnings
The project began as a Southwest regional project, funded by the IEL, and involving the 16 Directors of Education in that region, with the support of Dr. Ken Leithwood. Its purpose was to look at system level approaches to student learning, to further develop the leadership capacities of directors of education in Southwest Ontario and to develop a set of detailed recommendations for the refinement of OLF system leadership framework (System Practices and Procedures). The project included six full day sessions looking at recent research results, artefacts of directors’ work and networked learning opportunities. The final report entitled, Leading the Future: A Project of the Directors of Education in Southwest Ontario (Hoshizaki, Leithwood and Langan, 2010), was published by the IEL and is available on their website. [http://www.education-leadership-ontario.ca/files/IELLeadingFuture.pdf]

Second Stage
The results of this project were shared at the CODE meeting in January 2010 including testimonials from participants. Other directors and regions expressed an interest in developing similar learning opportunities in their regions. A proposal was approved by the IEL to make this possible for each region that expressed an interest and as a result sessions are being offered to all regions. These extended sessions will allow successful experience to be factored into the research base and will provide excellent professional learning opportunities for the participants.

Third Stage
The research team, led by Ken Leithwood, is conducting case studies in four high performing districts (Trillium Lakelands DSB, Nipissing-Parry Sound CDSB, Halton CDSB and a French board to be named in the fall) to begin the validation process for the district practices identified and refined through the earlier stages. The case studies will gather data from directors, superintendents, a subset of trustees and a subset of principals from each case study district through interviews and link this to the draft district practices and the specific student achievement measures readily available; EQAO scores, dropout data, credit accumulation, etc. Analysis of the case studies will likely lead to a further refinement of the district practices.

Fourth Stage
In this next stage, data will be collected from all principals and system leaders across the province using on-line surveys to provide further validation for the district practices at the end of the third stage. This data is expected to be collected in the fall of 2010 and a final set of district practices to be articulated by spring 2011.

2. Institute for Education Leadership

The Institute for Education Leadership (IEL) brings together representatives from the principals’ associations, the supervisory officers’ associations, councils of directors of education and the ministry of education in a unique collaborative partnership. It
advances and advocates for tri-level leadership (school, district and system). Its main objective is to assist school and system leaders in maximizing the achievement of all students.

The IEL has articulated four key goals: development, research, practice and communication. Development includes defining leadership, identifying the necessary skills and competencies (see the Ontario Leadership Framework) and staying on the leading edge of leadership knowledge and practice. The IEL supports research on effective leadership practices both in the Ontario context and internationally. It connects leadership practice to initiatives that support student achievement and well being.

To learn more about the work of the IEL go to http://www.education-leadership-ontario.ca/home.shtml.

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