

THE CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS

The Fifty-Seventh Annual Meeting

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2008-2009 ANNUAL REPORT CONNECTICUT PRINCIPALS' CENTER

Submitted by Benjamin Skaught, Chair

The Connecticut Association of Schools established the Principals' Center to address the professional development and related needs of practicing principals and to support the professional development of aspiring principals. The Connecticut State Department of Education has been an important partner with CAS in promoting the Principals' Center by providing both technical and financial assistance. Mike Buckley, associate executive director of CAS, is the director of the Center. The Center is served by an advisory board of experienced principals, superintendents, representatives of graduate and undergraduate educational leadership and education programs, and educational consultants.

In order to provide professional support for principals and advance the professional development of aspiring principals, the work of the Center has been organized into six strands of action:

- Strand #1 – Developing and Implementing Quality Administrator Aspirant Programs
- Strand #2 – Developing and Implementing Quality Administrator Certification Programs
- Strand #3 – Developing and Implementing Quality Induction/Mentor Programs for Beginning Principals
- Strand #4 – Providing Quality Professional Development for Career Principals
- Strand #5 – Advancing the Understanding of Issues Critical to Principals
- Strand #6 – Promoting the Effective Use of Technology by Principals

Each strand has its own committee of school administrators and consultants who plan and implement activities relevant to its focus. The existing committees have served hundreds of principals and aspiring principals throughout Connecticut this year in the provision of an impressive variety and depth of programs. In the interest of time, I will share with you here the primary activities of each committee.

■ **Aspirant Committee – Gene Horrigan, Chair**

Sixty-four aspiring administrators completed a two-day residential program in October at the Heritage in Southbury, the eighth time this event has been offered. Despite the popularity of the conference and favorable evaluations, the event will not be able to be sustained because of its cost.

A third “future leaders” program was conducted successfully for the New Haven Public Schools. Teachers who have their 092 certification and who complete the workshop series are granted interviews for administrative positions in the district as vacancies occur. The topics addressed in these workshops included building capacity for leadership; instructional leadership in daily practice; creating and sustaining a positive climate for learning; best practices for supervising and evaluating staff; and creating and sustaining professional learning communities. In three years, thirteen of the thirty-nine participants have been appointed to leadership positions.

For the past five years, the Principals' Center has opened up several of its workshops to aspiring administrators participating in Southern Connecticut State University's Educational Leadership Program. Over 130 SCSU interns attended at least one Principals' Center workshop this year. Also, University of Connecticut Administrative Preparation Program (UCAPP) students (and their mentors) were again allowed to attend workshops on a no-fee basis.

■ **Administrator Certification Committee**

The Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS) and the Department of Educational Leadership at the University of Connecticut's Neag School of Education (NSOE) have entered into a partnership which aims to address an increasing shortage of qualified administrators to fill positions of leadership within Connecticut's schools. The Principals' Center has specific responsibilities for conducting the clinical component of the University of Connecticut Administrator Preparation Program (UCAPP), a nationally recognized series of courses and internships that prepares candidates for the 092 intermediate administrator certification and leadership positions primarily at the school building and central office levels. As an active partner in this program, the Principals' Center brings its resources including aspiring administrators' program, administrator induction program, statewide network of seasoned mentors, and well-established relationships with schools throughout the state. CAS and NSOE, with their combined resources, believe that they have the capacity to address the critical issue of administrator shortages and, in the process, build the premier school leader preparation program in the nation.

With regard to the fourth year experience with UCAPP, the Center successfully *managed* eight cohorts with a total of 91 students. To *manage* means to link students to experienced mentors; help students develop leadership plans tied to program objectives; meet regularly with students and their mentors; help develop authentic experiences linked to courses; translate these experiences into products and artifacts for inclusion in an electronic portfolio; become familiar with course content; and participate in the department-wide curriculum revision process to accommodate both the CAS conditions for partnership and the demands of NCATE accreditation.

Placement rates for UCAPP graduates remain the highest of the seven principal preparation programs in the state. Within five years of graduation, approximately three out of four graduates are working in school or district leadership positions. A Stanford University study, co-authored by Linda Darling-Hammond, listed UCAPP as one of the top eight leadership development programs in the nation.

■ **Mentor-Mentee Committee – Dale Bernardoni, Chair**

One hundred and thirty-five new administrators (and an equivalent number of mentors) enrolled in the programs offered this year. The Tier I series covered orientation activities for mentors and mentees, networking, and building human capacity. Programs for Tier I (year one participants) included sessions on *navigating the culture of a new school while planting the seeds for change; avoiding the legal landmines that ensnare new administrators; what you need to know about the effective supervision of staff (that they didn't teach you in graduate school); and CT's framework for SRBI and how to make it work.*

A Tier II sequence of activities was sustained for year two participants. Topics in the Tier II sequence included *working with difficult people and dealing more effectively with confrontation and conflict; media and good public relations; special education issues for administrators; creating climates of respect; and CT's framework for SRBI and how to make it work.*

The collaboration among the CAS Principals' Center, Cooperative Educational Services (CES), and the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) – again with support from the Wallace Foundation – to develop model statewide induction program components continued. The new administrator induction academies developed by the three partners – *Leading Change . . . And Getting Everyone on Board* and *Classroom Data...Feedback, Follow-Up and Follow-Through* – were picked up by the CSDE and placed under the Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI) umbrella. Both were offered twice during the year. A third academy – *Getting the Climate Right so All Students Can Achieve* – was also developed and offered once.

While the professional development offered to both Tier I and Tier II participants was well-received, the key to the success of the mentor-mentee program remains the supportive, non-evaluative relationship established and sustained between the beginning administrator and the veteran mentor.

■ **Career Principals' Committee – Dr. Tim Breslin, Chair**

As a result of the collaboration with both CSDE and the State Education Resource Center (SERC) in the design and implementation of a Principals' Summer Institute, the event “sold out” from 2005 through 2008. Indeed, the 2008 institute, featuring Richard Lemons and Deborah Helsing, turned away over forty people.

Unfortunately, the CSDE has had to withdraw \$45,000 of the \$55,000 they had budgeted for the institute. In order to avoid losing the institute this year, the Center took the following steps:

- reduced the institute from two nights and two days to one night and two days, eliminating the previous evening registration, dinner, and program;
- took over from SERC program, publicity, registration, and on-site facilitation of the institute; and,
- reduced presenters' fees by half.

This year's institute, scheduled for June 30 – July 1 at the Heritage in Southbury, will “break even” if we again “sell out,” a realistic possibility given presenters Kati Haycock (president of the Education Trust); Kim Marshall (of *Marshall Memo* fame); and Lol Fearon, CSDE consultant. Themed *When principals can't do it all, what should they be doing to raise achievement and close gaps?*, the institute will focus on leadership lessons from schools on the performance frontier and on leveraging assessment, supervision, and evaluation to improve teaching and learning.

■ **Critical Issues Committee – Michael Galluzzo, Chair**

Two years ago the committee conducted a survey of member school leaders to determine what issues were perceived to be critical and worthy of examination. Given that demands on school leaders are enormous and complex and that the school principalship has become one of the most difficult management jobs in the United States, redefining and restructuring the principalship emerged as the most critical issue for review. University of Connecticut Professor Emeritus Mark Shibles agreed to help facilitate the project and a research project was designed around the following questions:

- Which core characteristics of job design and combination thereof are reported to be most related to the attractiveness/unattractiveness of the position?
- How does the work context of the position of principal relate to the job's attractiveness/unattractiveness?
- What job characteristics and facets relating to work itself are most important and which are currently lacking?

- Which factors such as independence in work job structure, doing meaningful work, exercising responsibility, achievement, recognition and hours of work are in need of change?
- What specifically should be changed about the current job design of the principalship that would make the job more attractive and doable?

Last May and June, forty principals drawn equally from urban and exurban settings participated in structured interviews. Data from these interviews was categorized, analyzed, and translated into a preliminary report. The committee identified a number of possible outcomes including the publication of a monograph with recommendations for restructuring for interested schools and districts, the sharing of results at conferences (CAS, CAPSS, CABE), and the implementation of recommendations for restructuring in an identified school and district. It is the latter that is of the most interest to the committee and, toward this end, Dr. Shibles is investigating possible sources of support for interested schools and districts. The Connecticut Commissioner of Education has been briefed on the report and has indicated an interest in connecting it to the new national standards for school administrators coming out in 2009.

The committee, building on its prior year involvement in reacting to and shaping the commissioner's secondary reform proposals, is also continuing its focus on 21st century skills.

■ **The Principal and Technology Committee – Robert Hale, Chair**

The committee continued to focus on the development and presentation of workshops designed to both improve the efficiency and productivity of school leaders and to enhance teaching and learning through the infusion of technology. The Intel Teach to the Future Leadership Forum was presented in October, an outgrowth of the certification training the committee offered to school and district leaders the previous year. A Principals' Center Technology Skill-Building Series was organized for the spring semester. While the January (RSS Technology) and February (Classroom Blogs) programs were conducted, the remainder of the series was cancelled due to low subscriptions.

As part of its year-long review of the structure and functioning of the Principals' Center, the board of control has asked whether the technology strand is still viable. It is not that the members question the necessity for school leaders to be technologically literate, or the value of technology as an enhancement of the teaching and learning process; rather, it is an awareness of the resources professional development providers such as SERC and the RESCs "bring to the table" and a questioning of whether the Center should continue to allocate its increasingly scarce resources. The committee will meet before the end of this year to formulate its recommendation to the board.

■ **Other Activities of Note**

The Center this year continued its involvement in both shaping and advancing the state board of education's secondary reform plan. Both the fall CAS conference and the assistant principals conference were organized to "roll out" the plan and build support for its components. Keynotes included Commissioner McQuillan; Education Trust President Kati Haycock; CSUS Chancellor David Carter; NASSP Executive Director Gerald Tirozzi; and Hartford Superintendent Stephen Adamowski. Breakout sessions highlighted CT school examples of many of the "best practices" required by the plan. While the current economic downturn has delayed legislative action, the Center, through its divisions and committees, is determined to advance the reform agenda regardless. The middle level division has shared with and received the endorsement of the Principals' Center Board of Control for a regional networking initiative that promises to go a long way to accomplishing this.

The 3rd Annual Connecticut Public School Data Showcase on May 13 and 14 attracted over 500 participants each day. They were inspired by keynoters Brian McNulty and Jane Bluestein, selected from a menu of breakout sessions, and viewed an incredible assortment of "data displays." CAS, CSDE, and EASTCONN again collaborated on this celebration of the state's school improvement efforts via the effective use of data to inform instruction.

The Center again sponsored a session of *The Breakthrough Coach* (TBC), demonstrating with forty more teams of administrators and secretaries that it is possible to "work less, play more, and still get the job done in a normal work week." To date, the Center has sponsored eight sessions with over 280 teams participating. A ninth session is scheduled for November 5 and 6.

The Center again offered its popular five session series on teacher evaluation. The series this year featured Attorney Thomas Mooney (again) and University of Connecticut Professor Richard Lemons (first time) and again was over-subscribed. Evaluations were so positive that the same presenters will do the series next year.

The Center continued its involvement with the Connecticut - Shandong Province (China) Sister School Project, nominating schools and principals for participation and hosting a number of Chinese delegations. The Center also secured funding to support a fourth Principal Shadowing Program (PSP) and a delegation drawn from the 100 plus Connecticut schools with established partnerships visited Shandong Province in April. The Center will pursue funding for a similar PSP experience during the next school year.

One significant area of concern relates to funding for the Center. Since its inception, the professional development activities of the Center have been partially subsidized by an Institute for Teaching and Learning (ITL) Grant from the CSDE. These funds annually make-up more than fifty percent of the Center's income. As a result of the tight economy and the state imposed reductions in the budget of the CSDE, the ITL funds have been withdrawn for next year. Coupled with the above mentioned loss of CSDE support for the Principals' Summer Institute, the anticipated drop in income for next year is at least \$135,000. Clearly the Center will not be able to carry on as usual. While committees and the Principals' Center board have not yet finalized all of the changes, the following results can be anticipated:

- reduction in the scope of the mentor—mentee program (from two years to one, and with some changes in the professional development activities);
- change in the format for the CAS Annual Fall Conference and Annual Assistant Principals Conference;
- change in the format for the Principals' Summer Institute (already implemented for the June '09 event);
- elimination of the Fall Aspiring Administrators Conference;
- increased fees for some professional development activities; and,
- increase in the number of "mini-conferences" around specific topics and networking events.

I am proud to share with you the accomplishments of the Center for this year. Particular thanks are in order for all the chairs and members of the committees for their dedication and voluntary efforts. Special thanks go also to the 226 administrators who volunteered as mentors either in the new administrator induction program (mentor-mentee) or the UCAPP program, or in some cases both. They do it because they feel an obligation to support the next generation of school leaders, a professional service initiative that ranks among the top leadership development activities in the state. Special recognition for their contributions is also extended to: CSDE School and District Improvement Bureau staff Susan Kennedy (chief), Nancy Cappello, Jo Ann Freiberg, Robert Pitocco, Meghan Martins, and Lol Fearon; Professor Barry Sheckley and Michele Femc-Bagwell, Educational Leadership Department, UCONN's Neag School of Education; Attorneys Thomas Mooney and Susan Freedman of the Neag School of Education and Shipman and Goodwin; CAS administrative assistant Erin Guarino, CAS Executive Director Michael Savage, CAS Assistant Executive Director Dennis Carrithers, and Center Director Mike Buckley.