



HR Pilot Project Newsletter

Volume 2, Issue 3

April 2013

Seven Levels of Reform

- Recruitment, Hiring, and Placement
- Comprehensive Induction
- Professional Development
- Supervision and Evaluation
- Teacher Leadership
- Organizational Structure
- Adult Professional Culture

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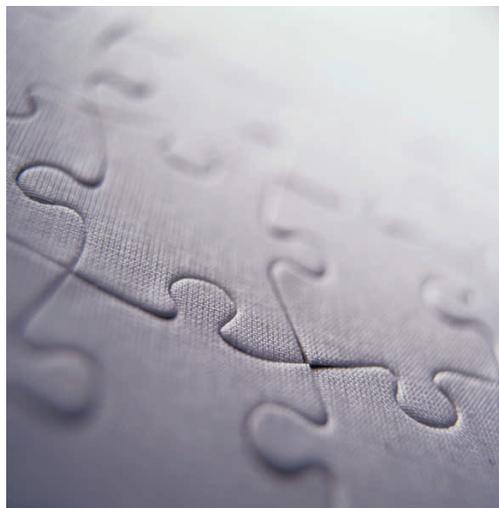
Integrating Educational Initiatives for Sustainability

The alignment and integration of various initiatives is a vital component of the Human Resource Pilot Project and other systemic reform efforts. However, although this idea may be ubiquitous in the educational change literature, concrete examples of how schools, districts, and regions have gone about the work of integration are more difficult to find. This newsletter highlights some of the strategies with which the pilot districts have attempted to create coherence among the various state, national, and local reforms currently at work in their districts.

The Human Resource Pilot Project operates under the belief that, in order for initiatives to be truly integrated, they must be rooted in a shared knowledge base. WGEE and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education have collaborated in the development of a common High Expertise Teaching (HET) knowledge base. This second year of the pilot project has seen an increased focus on using the HET knowledge base as a unifying force.

In the pilot districts, the idea of integration is often tied to another pressing concern: sustain-

ability. Changes in district and union leadership have brought sustainability to the forefront, especially as year two of the pilot project comes to an end: how can districts ensure that the gains made during the pilot project will continue in future years? Each district has answered that question in a different way, but all three understand the importance of creating coherence among initiatives.



Common Knowledge Base Unites PD Experiences in Brockton

With a major leadership transition approaching, pilot leaders in Brockton are hopeful that an integrated approach to reform, grounded in a common conception of professional knowledge, will contribute to the sustainability of their efforts.

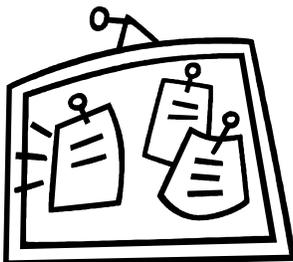
While the connections among pilot initiatives are clear from a central office perspective, Brockton's project leaders understand that the success of the pilot work depends in large part upon educators' perceptions. "There are a lot of good things that Brockton is doing in teaching and learning, and there's a lot more to be done," according to Ethan Cancell, Associate Director for Data and Accountability, "One of the challenges of the

central office is to come up with a compelling and convincing narrative of how these things piece together." Therefore, the district has worked to clearly communicate the message that its professional development, evaluation, induction, teacher leadership, and other aspects of the pilot project are directed towards creating concrete models to improve teaching and learning in the district.

Brockton's work in professional development is an excellent example of integration that is planned at the central office level, but coming to life at the school level. The Office of Teaching and Learning

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PILOT DISTRICT UPDATE



Teachers who participate in professional development in Brockton have multiple experiences that reinforce a single important concept or strategy.

Common Knowledge Base Unites PD Experiences in Brockton, continued

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wants to make sure that the multiple professional development experiences available to elementary teachers are coherent and relevant, and has devised a multi-layered professional development structure to meet this goal. As Elizabeth Barry, Executive Director of Teaching and Learning, puts it, part of the Office's mission is to "redefine the reasons why adults get together."

Brockton has established certain non-negotiable professional development experiences, thus operationalizing the HET knowledge base. Teachers who participate in professional development in Brockton will have multiple experiences that reinforce a single essential concept or strategy. From Ms. Barry's point of view, the connections among professional development experiences are clearly mapped out, but she understands the importance of highlighting the common purposes of those experiences for the teachers who will participate in them.

Citywide trainings form one level of the district's professional development structure. These trainings reach all teachers of a particular grade level from across the city, and are a very direct way of establishing common language and expectations across schools. While the citywide experiences have received positive feedback from teachers, the schedule only allows for several such trainings a year, leading to the challenge of providing "sustained professional development," as Dr. Cancell describes it. Teachers were receiving quality professional development through the citywides, but the next level of work involved knowing the extent to which practices were being taken up in individual classrooms.

To achieve this integration, Ms. Barry intentionally included the citywide PD topics in her regular meetings with principals. The challenge she posed to the instructional leaders was to determine how they would monitor and support implementation of the citywide topics by their teachers. Another promising development in the district's quest for sustained professional development experiences has been its recent expansion of Professional Learning Communities. The Pearson PLC model had been successfully piloted and implemented at two schools, but the PLC's did not explicitly seek to integrate other professional development experiences. This year, however, Brockton was chosen by the Center for Collaborative Education and DESE for a pilot of

the CCE's professional learning community protocol. As part of the pilot, two participating elementary schools are undergoing five full days of training and using PLC protocols developed by the CCE. Each school has chosen teacher leaders to facilitate the PLC work on the school level. District leaders also attend the professional development sessions surrounding the new PLCs, because they see the potential for integration of various district goals and professional development experiences. The citywide trainings have become a way of infusing PLC practices and expectations at the district level, thus supporting their implementation in elementary schools beyond the two selected for the CCE pilot. PLCs are also a powerful mechanism for ensuring that the discussions begun in the citywide trainings are regularly taken up at the school level. For example, a recent citywide training focused on different writing modes. To extend this work and maximize the potential impact on student learning, says Ms. Barry, "we need a vehicle or mechanism to make sure that teachers are taking about data in a meaningful way." The Office of Learning and Teaching developed a data protocol to ensure that teachers' time together had a clear instructional focus: interpreting data and deciding how the findings should inform instruction. Dr. Cancell points out that the central office need not mandate topics for teachers to discuss; the topics for the citywide trainings come straight from the same data that teachers will examine in their PLCs, so if teachers and central office staff are asking similar questions about the data, centralized and school-based professional development should reinforce each other.

A common knowledge base and common roots in student data lend the professional development opportunities in Brockton a high degree of internal coherence. As Brockton continues to carry out its pilot project plans, the links between professional development and other levers will continue to grow stronger; they are already apparent in, for instance, the career ladder potential of PLC leadership and the implications of organizational structure for school-based professional development. The thoughtful planning that goes into the development of an integrated series of experiences for educators is matched, in Brockton, by a commitment to communication about the underlying reasons for those experiences.

Clear Communication Aids Integration in Attleboro

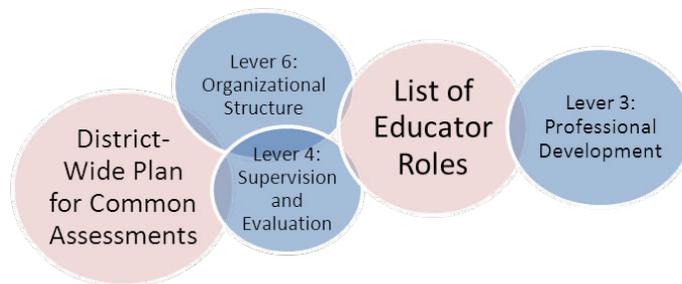
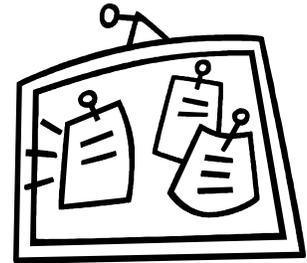
In the Attleboro Public Schools, consistent communication has supported the integration of the seven pilot project levers. A central message about the interconnected nature of the levers was embraced by the steering committee and has trickled down to those involved in the pilot project at all levels. Assistant Superintendent Dave Sawyer believes that the role of the central office in the pilot project is to help draw out the connections among levers and continually repeat the message that this is an integrated approach, not a set of disparate tasks. Rather than something extra, he emphasizes, the pilot work is a way of addressing historical concerns.

Mr. Sawyer has a unique perspective, since he observed the first year of the pilot largely from the outside. In 2011-2012, as a school administrator, he was involved in the supervision and evaluation lever subcommittee, but was not involved in the steering committee or the grant planning process. From his vantage point, he says, disconnects between the various lever committees led to the development of plans that, while individually strong, did not capitalize on the natu-

ral connections between the levers. He sees a clear shift this year from the expansive lever plans to a more focused approach to strengthening the aspects of structure and culture that unite them.

Steering committee meetings have supported the ongoing integration of initiatives. Lever updates are a standing agenda item; each lever committee has a representative on the steering committee, and meetings are an optimal place for making connections between levers. Connections range from self-evident opportunities for sharing a workload, as in the example below, to collaborative activities that reveal the extent to which the lever structure has become embedded in district culture. As an example of the latter, Lever 5, Teacher Leadership, has been working with Lever 3 to develop and conduct a survey about professional development that will be administered by Instructional Leadership Teams. Not only does this provide valuable information for Lever 3, but it will also help to achieve a Lever 5 goal of increasing the input and decision-making **[continued on page 5]**

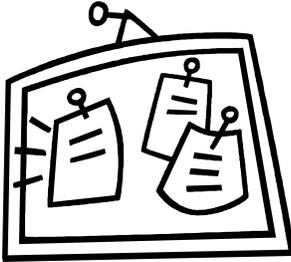
PILOT DISTRICT UPDATE



What does successful lever integration look like in practice? Mr. Sawyer illustrated with an example:

- Lever 6, Organizational Structure, includes a new District Data and Accountability Team (DDAT). The DDAT is working to develop a plan for all common assessments across the district, from state testing to homegrown common assessments.
- Lever 4, Supervision and Evaluation, needs to outline the assessments that will help to measure growth for each educator. Seeing an opportunity for collaboration, Lever 4 reaches out to Lever 6. The two groups work closely on establishing a clear and complete list of educator roles and available measurements, a list that will become part of ongoing negotiations about the measures that make up the evaluation system.
- Meanwhile, Lever 3, Professional Development, wants to ensure that their professional development plan is completely comprehensive, with opportunities for every educator in the district. Hearing about the activities of Levers 4 and 6 at a steering committee meeting, Lever 3 decides to use the same list of educator roles developed by Levers 6 and 4.

PILOT DISTRICT UPDATE



Structures for Collaboration: Revere’s Round Robin

In Revere, each steering committee member serves as a liaison to a lever sub-committee. This design has helped to connect the steering committee to the lever work, but it can also have the function of connecting the levers to each other, as demonstrated in Revere’s February Round Robin-style meeting.

While the lever sub-committees have deep knowledge of their own initiatives of interest by this point in the pilot project, Revere’s central office administrators and other steering committee members recognized their unique opportunity to see the bigger picture of how the various lever plans might fit together. Noticing a number of potential connections between the efforts of different sub-committees, the steering committee took a very active role in identifying connections among levers. They felt that the best way to make use of their “big-picture” vantage point was to create an opportunity for focused dialogue between sub-committees that appeared to be working on similar issues.

In order to establish and deepen connections among the lever committees, the steering committee devised a Round Robin activity for early February. Over the course of several sessions, sub-committees who were deemed likely to benefit from collaboration were given

the opportunity to meet with each other and discuss selected areas of overlap or potential overlap between their plans. Although the steering committee played a major role in these initial meetings, plans for further collaboration were left up to the sub-committees to propose.

A number of concrete plans emerged from the Round Robin. For example, the Supervision and Evaluation reports that, as a result of their meeting with the Professional Development Committee, they are now working with the Induction Committee to develop a session during New Teacher Orientation where they would share resources on evaluation, such as FAQs and definitions, to ensure that new employees understand the Educator Evaluation System from the time they start. The majority of sub-committee members reported that the Round Robin was a very worthwhile experience and welcomed further meetings with other committees.

Revere’s solution to the “silo” problem that sometimes plagues simultaneous reform efforts required direct action on the part of the centralized decision-making body. However, stakeholders at other levels of the system will continue to use their deep knowledge of their particular reform categories in generating a whole-district action plan.

The chart below shows the schedule of Revere’s Round Robin meeting; abbreviations refer to the seven lever sub-committees.

		Tells this team about...						
		RHP	IND	PD	SE	TLCL	OS	APC
THIS TEAM ...	RHP		New Teacher Survey					
	IND					Master Mentors		
	PD				Plans to re-shape PD structures		Leveraging current contractual time for CP/PLG	
	SE		Introducing new teachers to S & E	PD needed for S&E				
	TL							
	OS					Teacher Leader ideas around PLG/CP facilitators		
	APC				How S & E is impacting school cultures	How culture supports development of teacher leadership roles	Structures or protocols to develop and sustain a positive culture	

Union Leaders Talk About Sustainability

As union leaders and administrators in the pilot districts contemplate the pilot project's 2014 end date and other challenges to continuity, sustainability has been a frequent topic of conversation. Mariregis Fusco, president of the Revere Teachers Association, and Adeline Bee, president of the Attleboro Education Association, individually shared their thoughts about the sustainability of the pilot initiatives, the importance of continuing the reforms, and the unique role of the union in promoting lasting change.

For Ms. Fusco, who is wrapping up her first year as union president, the interplay between the Professional Development, Professional Culture, and Organizational Structure levers has the potential to make a significant difference to students and teachers. The district's creation of new opportunities for educators to provide input confirms that "they're valued, they're respected, and their professional opinions matter," says Ms. Fusco.

Like Ms. Fusco, Ms. Bee is hopeful that her district's focus on professional culture will outlast the duration of the pilot project. She praises specific reform efforts, including mentoring and evaluation. Attleboro's work with evaluation, in particular, is a point of pride: "Over the last few years, APS has worked hard to meet and often exceed state standards in their evaluation documents," Ms. Bee writes. Since the introduction of the new state evaluation system, "both management and union have sat at the table for long hours to hammer out a fair and equitable evaluation system, but one that will also ensure educator growth." While the results are positive, the collaborative processes will be just as important to sustain.

District-Wide Communication

Ms. Fusco notes that Revere's empowered steering committee has recently focused on how to communicate the meaning and goals of the pilot project to all staff members in the district. The committee has discussed several ways in which it might enhance communication about the pilot work, including an electronic platform for teaching staff to provide feedback to the pilot committees, a regularly distributed broadsheet about the progress being made by each sub-committee, and brief sub-committee presentations in directors' meetings and principals' meetings to ensure that school administrators have a common understanding of these changes.

In Attleboro, according to Ms. Bee, the steering committee has prepared to sustain the work by expanding the numbers of people involved, and also by working on updating the school community about the work. Communication with multiple stakeholder groups, including educators, parents, community members, and the school committee, helps to spread understanding of and support for the work.

Meeting Challenges

Asked about challenges to sustainability, Ms. Bee notes that Attleboro will have a new superintendent next year, and suggests that discussion groups with the appointee might help to ease the transition and bridge the leadership gap. She also notes the time commitment that the pilot reforms require; successful management of the fast-paced change process depends upon the involvement of an ever-increasing number of people.

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Clear Communication in Attleboro, continued

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power of ILTs.

The communication about integration seems to have been effective; Mr. Sawyer now reports that he has heard people who are not involved in the project use the language of integration, asking how a particular district initiative overlaps with the work being done by various lever committees. "This is slow going," said Mr. Sawyer. "It takes time. But the more people see how it all

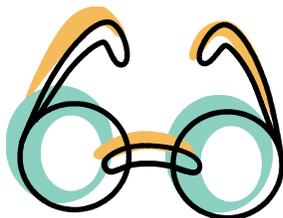
fits together, the more they feel like they are part of something. It's easy to let time constraints pressure you into rushing, but when you rush you miss opportunities to integrate the work that's being done." This philosophy of deliberate and meaningful change will help Attleboro to sustain the positive cultural transformation that has been evident over the past few years, especially as the district prepares for the appointment of a new superintendent in the coming months.

PERSPECTIVES



"Everyone wants to be part of a great public school system in which students are achieving... Feedback from teachers will make the system even more successful."
-Mariregis Fusco, RTA

PERSPECTIVES



“Trust, collegiality, and team work are all part of an effective and functional culture. Humor is also an integral player... because the stress in education is not retreating.”

-Adeline Bee, AEA

Union Leaders Talk About Sustainability

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For Ms. Fusco, major challenges include the availability of economic resources and the need for buy-in from all staff. “All of the district stakeholders need to feel an investment in the changes, to see the positive effects on student achievement, and to have the opportunity to weigh in from their own professional experience and expertise. They need to feel as though they’re a part of the reforms.”

Asked how stakeholders can influence district change, Ms. Fusco returns to the ideas of professional development and adult professional culture. She cites several recent initiatives that have been successful in Revere, including the district’s solicitation of funding proposals from lever sub-committees made up of teachers and administrators. Through this initiative, teachers have collaborated with administrators to make concrete and lasting changes to district policy, from the institution of an in-district job fair to the development of a communication plan for more efficiently sharing pilot-related developments with all teachers. Such opportunities for input and dialogue, according to Ms. Fusco, have helped to strengthen an already strong district culture, especially as the work of the pilot sub-committees has become more visible across the district.

While school culture differs across Attleboro’s nine buildings, Ms. Bee writes, all are working to nurture an effective, functional culture characterized by “trust, collegiality, and team work.” Humor, she adds, is “also an integral player, especially in a highly-focused goals-driven environment, because the stress in education is not retreating.” Attleboro’s gains in culture can continue, she says, through “continued open and honest two-way communication, training, and dedication.”

Expanding open, transparent communication is a priority for Ms. Fusco, as well, especially when it comes to the new evaluation process. From the RTA’s point of view, it will be important to ensure that the tool is fulfilling its promise as a growth-oriented system. “Everyone wants to be part of a great public school system in which students are achieving,” says Ms. Fusco. “I want teachers to have the opportu-

nity to continue to give feedback and make the system even more successful.”

New teacher leadership positions, filled by association members, have created “a sense of security, and a sense that information is getting across to the members.” Through periodic discussions at school-based meetings, teachers have the opportunity to ask questions of the evaluation leaders. Teachers who do not have defined leadership roles will still have a voice in how the system is implemented, says Ms. Fusco; “asking them for regular feedback is a way to show that someone cares about their input and values the job they’re doing every day.”

Union Role

Of the union’s unique role in sustaining change, Ms. Fusco says, “If we can continue open and transparent conversation between the administration and the association, we can achieve the goal of comprehensive reform while staying within members’ contractual rights. We can do that by continuing to encourage member input.” This input, she stresses, can only be given in an environment where teachers feel safe to share their professional opinions without fear of retribution. She finds that her presence alongside other teachers and administrators on the district steering committee has helped her to represent her members during decision-making processes: “When we’re in that room everybody feels that they are equal partners. Teachers don’t feel intimidated to speak up in support of their colleagues and to advocate for what they believe to be in the best interests of their students.” Ms. Fusco is hopeful that, as teachers learn about their colleagues’ presence on the steering committee, they will feel free to share issues that they would like them to bring up at future meetings.

For Ms. Bee, the union’s role includes “bringing more faces to the table. We have worked with leadership at all levels,” she writes, “and I believe this has seriously helped us to handle outside issues that have arisen.” As a result of the collaboration around evaluation and other district reforms, she says, respect between labor and management has increased; “We need to continue working hand-in-hand.”

WORKING GROUP FOR EDUCATOR EXCELLENCE

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Thanks to the following individuals for contributing their perspectives to this newsletter:

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Selected Resources on Integration and Sustainability

- Anderson, S. E., Mascal, B., Stiegelbauer, S., & Park, J. (2012). No one way: Differentiating school district leadership and support for school improvement. *Journal of Educational Change*, 13(4), 403-430.
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Mission of the Working Group for Educator Excellence

WGEE is a broad coalition of 60 individuals from 25 statewide organizations who are united in the belief that the most effective way to provide every child with an excellent education is to take a systemic approach to influencing what teachers and educational leaders know and can do. We believe when key elements of the human resource system are strengthened to align with one another and with a common research-based, field-tested core of professional knowledge, the cumulative effect will be improved student achievement and a more efficient and effective system that strengthens teacher and leader expertise.

Human Resource Pilot Project

The pilot project, funded by the RTTT initiative, is a joint effort by the WGEE and DESE to systematically and strategically create, strengthen, and align the key influences on the quality of teaching and leadership in three school districts: Attleboro, Brockton, and Revere. The influences, or levers, include:

- Recruitment, Hiring, and Placement
- Comprehensive Induction
- Professional Development
- Supervision and Evaluation,
- Teacher Leadership
- Organizational Structure
- Adult Professional Culture.

Through qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis, we aim to determine whether alignment will improve the quality of teaching and leadership.