Common Factors Among 2001-02 OULP Seminars

Focus on Student Achievement, and Related State and Federal Laws and Regulations: The Ohio University Leadership Project’s (OULP’s) seminars, for the current school year, have been particularly focused on student achievement, and on related state and federal laws and regulations. This focus resulted from the need expressed by school leaders to improve achievement in a manner that is compatible with the laws and regulations. In addition, effective approaches for their initiation and implementation were discussed.

Attention to Issues of Leadership and Change: These issues were embedded within the discussion of implementation as described above. Both leadership and change were addressed since the project’s participants are faced with the challenges associated with the implementation of approaches for improved student achievement and the implementation of the related laws and regulations. After all, the manner in which they are carried out, as with most issues in a school, can dictate the level of acceptance and/or rejection.

Cooperative Planning, Implementation, and Support for the Seminars: Many, if not most, of the OULP’s seminars have evolved from cooperative planning, implementation, and support with other organizations and agencies. State, regional, and local groups have been involved with the development of the seminars. By working together with others, the OULP has been able to maximize the quality and effectiveness of the seminars, and the efficiency with which they have been delivered.
A sundry of topics has been attended by the participants in the superintendent cohort. Among the topics that have been addressed were: (a) leadership and effective approaches to change, (b) learning, teaching, and observation/evaluation (c) low performing schools and issues of economics, disabilities, gender, and race, (d) measurements of student growth, (e) relations between school improvement plans and achievement needs of students, (f) school-community communications and engagement, (g) school finance issues, including the status of the DeRolph case, (h) staff selection, and (i) state and federal legislation, particularly HB’s 1 & 94, and the ESEA, Reauthorization Act (No Child Left Behind).
The secondary principal cohort is comprised of high school, junior high, and middle school principals. As with the elementary principal and superintendents’ cohorts, a useful and constructive working relationship exists with the leaders of the respective state association, namely the Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators. These relationships reflect the philosophy of the OULP: to work in a cooperative manner with other organizations and agencies in order to provide needed professional development. This approach is noted in other articles of this edition of “EXTRA” and seems to be an effective manner to obtain the best “bang for our professional development buck”.

The secondary principals have focused on, among other topics, (a) an application of the 2001 state operating standards, (b) leadership and effective approaches to change, (c) learning, teaching, and observation/evaluation, (d) legal issues, (e) legislative matters, particularly state and federal regulations pertaining to secondary schools, (f) special education issues, and (h) state-wide approaches and practices for the operation of effective secondary schools.
Update of Elementary Principal Cohort

The participants in the elementary principal cohort expressed concern, along with other issues, about the ramifications of the “Fourth Grade Guarantee”. One of the ramifications involves the dynamics associated with promotion, retention, and intervention. For this reason, a seminar was dedicated to useful ways to address the impact of the guarantee as it intersects with promotion, retention and intervention.

The seminar involved a presentation by the associate director of the state association for elementary principals, namely the Ohio Association of Elementary School Administrators. His presentation was followed by a panel discussion that included a coordinator of intervention services/psychology, an elementary principal, an elementary supervisor, a director of curriculum, and a director of federal programs. The presentation and the panel discussion were informative and engaging. In fact, there was significant and useful “give and take” among the seminar participants regarding the best approaches to promotion, retention, and intervention.

The elementary principals’ cohort, as with the secondary principals and the superintendents, addressed multiple topics. They included: (a) diagnostic assessment and intensive interventions, (b) leadership and effective approaches to change, (c) learning, teaching, and observation/evaluation, (d) legal matters, (e) promotion, retention, and intervention, (f) state and federal legislative issues including the ESEA Reauthorization/No Child Left Behind Act, and (g) state standards, regulations, and guidelines related to the responsibilities of an elementary principal and school.
Update of Treasurer Cohort

The treasurers’ cohort has focused upon regulations evolving from state legislation and related state agencies such as the Office of the Auditor of the State of Ohio and the Ohio Department of Education. The treasurers particularly have attended to the ramifications of the legislation and regulations and how they might be implemented with effective leadership and consideration of effective approaches to change.

The topics included: the new GASB-34 report, querying accounting data into useful applications, including on-line database connections and the importation of general text data into a spreadsheet for analysis and state funding. The treasurers’ seminars, while not limited to, were conducted primarily in computer labs in order to maximize the use of technology.
The Intersection of Learning, Teaching, and Observation/Evaluation

Enhanced learning and teaching have been the focus of educational reform and accountability. In response to the growing expectation for accountability, school leaders have been exploring ways to enhance learning and teaching and to couple them with helpful approaches to observation and evaluation. The work of Charlotte Danielson has gained specific attention with these efforts. Danielson’s framework for teaching and her notions about the use of teacher evaluation to enhance professional practices have been the focus of considerable consideration and planning. In fact, they will be presented, discussed, and analyzed at two sets of seminars scheduled in early June and supported by several educational agencies. The presentations and discussions will be followed by seminars and updates focused on the usefulness and application of the concepts.

Danielson’s approaches to teaching, learning, and observation/evaluation can be summarized in the following two sentences. Her framework, “identifies those aspects of a teacher’s responsibilities that have been documented through empirical studies and theoretical research as promoting improved student learning” (Danielson, 1996). Danielson’s notions about observation and evaluation are based upon, “a coherent definition of the domain of teaching, techniques and procedures for assessing all aspects of teaching, and trained evaluators who can make consistent judgements about performance, based on evidence of the teaching as manifested in the procedures” (Danielson and McGreal, 2000).

Technology for School Leaders

Another seminar, evolving from multiple group planning and support, is the forthcoming Technology for School Leaders Workshop. It represents a rather comprehensive treatment of the manner in which school leaders can use technology to address more effectively their responsibilities. The program was developed, with considerable planning, over a period of approximately 18 months. It is expected that the program results can be analyzed and used to develop an approach to help aspiring and current school leaders to be particularly effective with the application of technology.

June Seminars

1. Introduction and Utilization of Danielson’s Framework and Related Approaches to Observation; June 10th, 11th, & 12th; Seminar is full.

2. Intersection of Learning, Teaching, and Evaluation; June 13th; Limited space available as of press time.

3. Technology for School Leaders; June 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th, & 21st; Very limited space available as of press time.

If you are interested in participating in the June seminars, please contact Robin Boyd at (740) 533-4579 or at boydr@ohio.edu.
Leadership & Spirit
by Russ S. Moxley

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In the text Leadership & Spirit, Russ Moxley explores the difficulties of leadership during challenging circumstances - today. Often local administrators work long hours, investing much personal time and energy with little return for their investment. Current leaders are hungry for a better way. Moxley offers an alternative.

A fundamental idea within this text is that leadership either suffocates or elevates spirit – a difficult task in times of imposed, legislative accountability. Moxley suggests that many educational organizations are suffering from a “dispirited” membership. Leaders must breath life into their schools. But how?

Breathing life requires dealing with paradox - capably managing the balance between each counterpart. Effective leaders balance an individual’s need for autonomy while building greater interdependence and community in his/her school. Effective leaders manage the organizational paradox of achievement and productive accountability by valuing each individual – the who is more important than the what and the how. Schools can achieve more collectively if each member recognizes and fills his/her role. Collective success begins with each individual. Effective leaders are able to manage these paradoxes and foster a commitment to organizational success.

How might a building leader accomplish this balance? Leaders build partnerships. Moxley cites five requirements for partnerships: a balance of power, shared purpose, shared responsibility, respect, and partnering in the nitty-gritty. Leaders encourage staff to act interdependently as teams in order to surface assumptions, solve problems, share responsibility, develop common goals, use dialogue, and willingly hold conflict. In effect, true leaders foster organizational leadership. True leaders foster courage vs. collusion. This transformation is not instantaneous; but is not without benefit.

Genuine partnerships enjoy energized & animated workers that demonstrate “full headed” and not “half hearted” workers. The staff exemplifies a commitment to organizational purposes. Efforts and patience toward authentic partnerships and the development of a learning community reap many dividends. Individuals flourish. If individuals flourish – so do educational organizations. Schools experience not just proficient performance; but rather inspired feats.

Contrarily, Moxley cautions against traditional leadership approaches. Coercive power is only “on loan” from employees and encourages dependency and fear. Leadership by command undermines true reform. A benevolent dictator is still a dictator. Local administrators are readily able to avoid these leadership pitfalls if (s) he know one’s self well.

Moxley suggests that what goes on down deep within drives us. We do what we are. Or rather what we believe we are. Humans often suffer from spiritual “dis-ease”. Individuals do not truly know who they are or recognize what triggers one’s actions. Becoming aware of those things that “set us off”, considering what we dislike in others, and listening carefully to those around us (The truth hurts at times.) can help leaders discover triggers and hidden values.

Therefore, leaders must be authentic – transparent, honest, and have congruent actions. Leaders as partners must: claim personal power by not accepting responsibility for the thoughts and feelings of others, become more proactive, expect partnerships by treating others as partners and expect this in return, honor diversity, learn new speaking and deep listening skills, be present, pay attention, and hold one’s tongue. True leaders decline the leader role and avoid coronations. Piece of cake!

Moxley’s encouraging text has given its readers an avenue for transformational leadership. As they step into leadership roles, their capacity to lead is only as great as their capacity to build leadership in others.
Wow! This year’s prom and graduation ceremonies are already history. The 2001-02 school year is nearly over. It has been a challenging year for the OULP. There have been distractions that would normally deter attendance at the project’s seminars. But attendance has grown, in fact rather significantly.

The growth reflects, I think, the efforts of the OULP to work with other organizations and agencies to identify, address, and support professional development that is timely, relevant, and needed by school leaders. The number of state and regional organizations that have collaborated with the OULP has and hopefully will continue to increase. I am particularly thankful and pleased with the willingness of others to work with the OULP to enhance the quality and efficiency with which professional development has been provided.

While seminar plans were made prior to this school year, they were revisited and revised in order to address changing events. For example, the announcement of ESEA Reauthorization/No Child Left Behind Bill necessitated the development of new seminars. In fact, the participants were surveyed, at almost every seminar, regarding the issues that needed attention in the future. Based upon the reactions, plans were updated in order that the seminars were timely and on-target.

I hope that you have a productive and enjoyable summer. Please contact me if you have suggestions and questions. They will be appreciated and given my attention. I can be reached at larsonw@ohio.edu or at (740) 533-4580.

Until then, Bill Larson

Director of the Leadership Project