

Focus on Leadership, Climate, Culture and Instructional Practices: Practical Strategies for School Improvement

NASSP
Las Vegas, 2007

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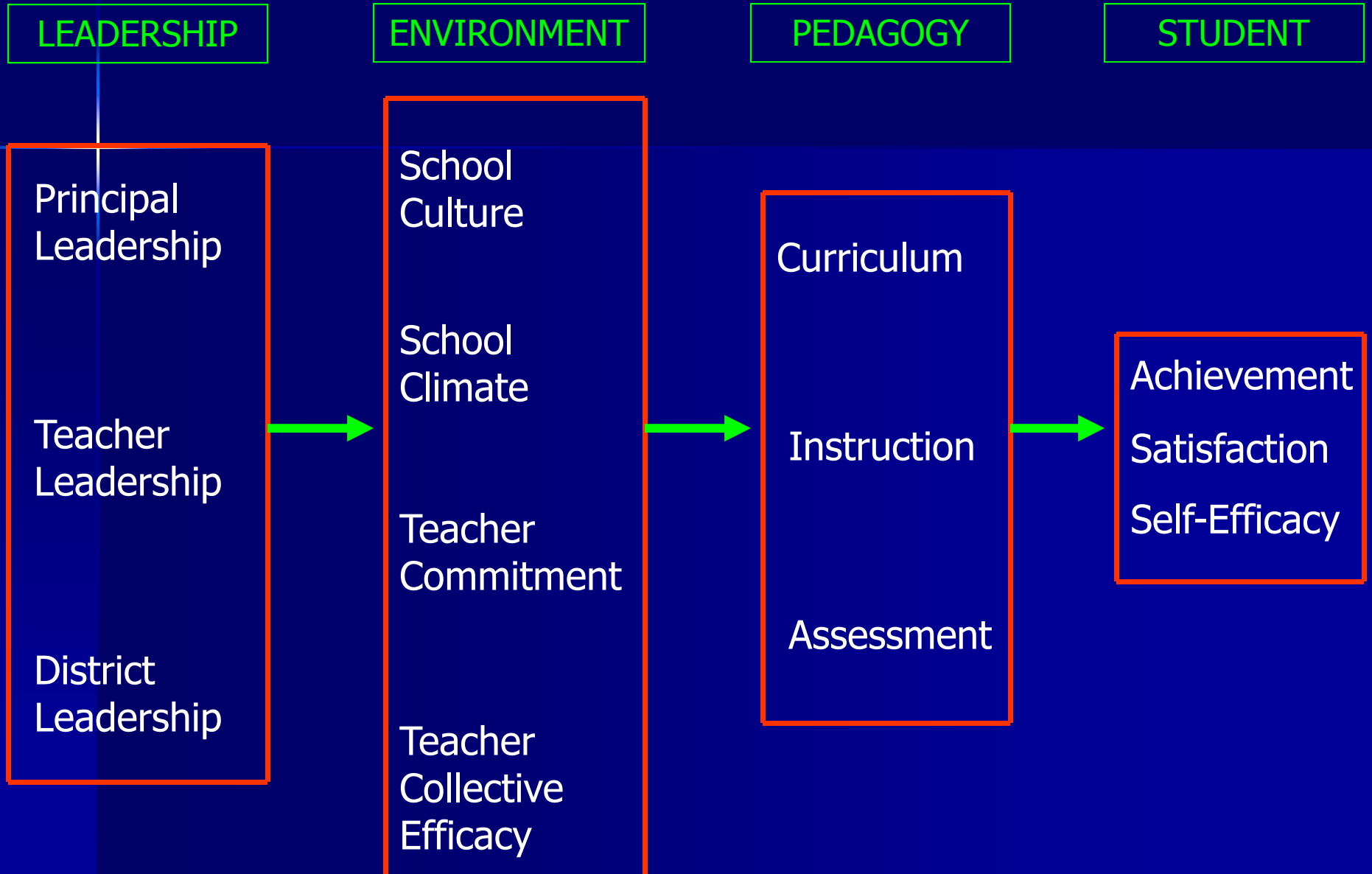
Outline of Today's Discussion

- Introductions...
- Background for this presentation...
- Big Picture...
- Key questions and related strategies...
- Self-assessment tools to support school improvement process...
- Closing Comments, Q/A...

Project ASSIST Background

- ASSIST: Achieving Success through School Improvement Site Teams
- Developed—1995-96 as a service project to Missouri schools
- 1996-1998—First Cohort
 - Elementary Schools
 - Middle Level Schools
 - High Schools
- 1998-2000—Second Cohort
 - Middle Level Schools
- 2003-2006—Third Cohort
 - Middle Level Schools of poverty and low achievement

The Big Picture...



Q1: Do we have meaningful statements of school values, beliefs, and vision that drive school goals and action plans?

- Did the faculty work collaboratively to develop the school's values, beliefs, vision, goals, and action plan statements?
- Do we revisit those statements periodically?
- Have those statements become a natural part of our conversations?
- Is everyone knowledgeable of them?
- Does everyone endorse them?
- Does everyone "live" them?
- Do we believe that working in a school with a clear set of values and beliefs and a vision and a direction for change makes a difference in student learning?

Q2: Does our principal lead our faculty using collaborative, facilitative problem solving?

- Do our faculty meetings consist of discussion sessions for problem solving?
- Does our faculty collectively analyze key school improvement data?
- Are our faculty discussions both small group and whole group?
- Do our leaders facilitate the discussions and empower teachers to make decisions?
- Do we believe that having a principal who is collaborative and facilitative makes a difference in student learning?

Q3: Do we have a team of teacher leaders and a principal who work collaboratively to provide leadership for change?

- Do we have a leadership, think-tank, problem solving team of teacher leaders?
- Does this team study together and become highly knowledgeable about best educational practices?
- Does this team design and lead faculty in similar study?
- Do members of the team devote extra time and energy to their leadership roles?
- Does our faculty respect the members of this team?
- Are our teacher leaders selected by their peers?
- Are our teacher leaders positive, constructive role models?
- Is our team small in size, but representative of our faculty?
- Do we have a process to groom new team members and rotate membership?
- Do we believe that having a team of teacher leaders who facilitate faculty discussions and problem solving makes a difference in student learning?

Q4: Do we have a caring, collaborative culture and trusting, respectful climate?

- Are our school's assumptions, beliefs, rituals and ceremonies focused on student success?
- Do our teachers trust...each other, administrators, parents, and students?
- Do our teachers collectively overwhelm the negativity from skeptics and cynics during faculty discussions?
- Do our daily schedules and other structures of the day support small and large group teacher collaboration?
- Do our teachers enjoy their jobs and want to come to work?
- Do individual teachers learn from each other?
- Do we believe that having a caring, collaborative culture and trusting, respectful climate make a difference in student learning?

Q5: Do we understand adolescent development and effectively relate to today's students?

- Do our teachers care about students enough to build a relationship of mutual trust and respect?
- Do our teachers accept personal and collective responsibility for student success?
- Do our teachers know the current facts and issues about today's students (drugs, alcohol, sex, crime, etc.)?
- Do our teachers have the skills to work with students who are "different" and "indifferent"?
- Do we believe that understanding student development and relating to today's students make a positive difference in student learning?

Q6: Does our school provide a relevant, challenging curriculum based upon state standards and expectations?

- Does our curriculum develop basic knowledge and skill for success at the next level of study?
- Does our curriculum have the flexibility to take students beyond basic standards?
- Is our curriculum integrated so relationships across disciplines are evident, as they are in life?
- Does our curriculum avoid tracking and ability grouping across courses?
- Do our teachers have a deep knowledge in their content areas?
- Do our teachers implement a relevant and challenging curriculum?
- Do all of our teachers teach the written curriculum?
- Do we believe that a relevant, challenging, and aligned curriculum makes a difference in student learning?

Q7: Is our instruction aligned with curriculum, monitored and discussed, and based upon best practices?

- Do we collect and discuss data about the level of student engagement during instruction?
- Are our students' learning experiences engaging, authentic, problem-based, and differentiated?
- Do we frequently use instructional methods that foster higher-order thinking?
- Do we use a flexible schedule that supports personalized learning by creating time for remediation, maintenance, and enrichment?
- Is our instruction designed around students' interests?
- Do we involve students in the identification and design of instructional strategies?
- Do we believe that the use of instruction grounded in current knowledge of best practice makes a difference in student learning?

Q8: Do we use formative assessments aligned with curriculum and instruction?

- Do we regularly use common unit assessments across all classes teaching the same content standards?
- Do our assessments cover the basic content standards that the state expects our students to master?
- Do we administer formal assessments that mimic state tests, provide data about mastery, and help students acclimate to testing protocols?
- Do we modify lesson design and instruction based upon formative assessment data?
- Do we involve students in the design and scoring of assessments?
- Do we provide timely, meaningful feedback to students based upon formative assessments?
- Do we believe that using formative assessment data to redesign and reteach make a difference in student learning?

Q9: Does district leadership implement policies and practices that support school-site change?

- Do district administrators and policy makers understand the processes necessary for school improvement, i.e. the multiple and complex facets of change described in the previous statements?
- Do district administrators and policy makers make decisions and set policy based upon what is best for all students in the district?
- Do district administrators and policy makers provide the personnel resources necessary for school improvement?
- Do district administrators and policy makers value the importance of steady, continuous improvement?
- Do district administrators and policy makers support changing student achievement through a steady, continuous school improvement process, even though the changes take years to make?
- Do we believe that the actions and decisions of district administrators and policy makers make a positive difference in student learning?

Closing comments:

- Change is slow and complex...
- Establish teacher leadership team...
- Understanding Big Picture is essential...
- Define the elements you want to study and change...(Content Framework)
- Establish a process for change...(Process Framework)
- Use the three following diagrams as examples...

The Big Picture...

LEADERSHIP

ENVIRONMENT

PEDAGOGY

STUDENT

Principal Leadership

Teacher Leadership

District Leadership



School Culture

School Climate

Teacher Commitment

Teacher Collective Efficacy



Curriculum

Instruction

Assessment



Achievement

Satisfaction

Self-Efficacy

CARING, COLLABORATIVE CULTURE
TRUSTING, RESPECTFUL CLIMATE

**SUCCESS
for each
STUDENT**

- Academic
- Social
- Emotional
- Physical

**ORGANIZATIONAL
LEADERSHIP**

- **Principal/Administrative Team Leadership**
 - ♦ Establish Distributive/Participative Leadership (Capacity)
 - ♦ Establish Transformational Leadership (Change)
 - ♦ Establish Instructional Leadership (Pedagogy)
 - ♦ Establish Managerial Leadership (Efficiency)
- **Staff Leadership**
 - ♦ Accept Leader Roles (School Improvement Team)
 - ♦ Become a Community of Leaders (Staff)
 - ♦ Commit to Success for Each Student (Staff)
- **Parent Leadership**
 - ♦ Accept Leader Roles (Committees)
 - ♦ Provide Instructional Support (Volunteers)
- **Student Leadership**
 - ♦ Accept Leader Roles (Committees)
 - ♦ Develop Leadership (Student Governance)
- **Community Leadership**
 - ♦ Accept Leader Roles (Committees)
 - ♦ Provide Instructional Support (Volunteers)
- **District Leadership**
 - ♦ Understand Site-Level Needs
 - ♦ Support Site-Level Needs

**ORGANIZATIONAL
PEDAGOGY**

- **Standards-Based, Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum**
 - ♦ Align with State Standards
 - ♦ Align with Curricula of other Grade Levels
 - ♦ Align with Instruction and Assessment
 - ♦ Integrate across disciplines
 - ♦ Relevant and Authentic for Young Adolescents
- **Standards-Based, Developmentally Appropriate Instruction**
 - ♦ Align with State Standards
 - ♦ Align with Curriculum and Assessment
 - ♦ Engage Learners Actively (Mentally and Physically)
 - ♦ Relevant and Authentic for Young Adolescents
- **Standards-Based, Developmentally Appropriate Assessment**
 - ♦ Align with State Standards
 - ♦ Align with Curriculum and Instruction
 - ♦ Align with State/National Testing Methods
 - ♦ Relevant and Authentic for Young Adolescents
- **Grounded in Knowledge of Learner**
 - ♦ Match Academic Readiness and Capacity
 - ♦ Promote Socialization with Peers and Adults
 - ♦ Foster Emotional Self-Image and Self-Control
 - ♦ Foster Self-Esteem (General & Academic)
 - ♦ Match Physical Needs & Development

**ORGANIZATIONAL
STRUCTURE**

- **Change Processes**
 - ♦ Establish Comprehensive and Systemic Processes
 - ♦ Establish Vision-Driven not Deficit-Driven Change
 - ♦ Inform Change via Formative and Summative Data
- **Program Delivery**
 - ♦ Embed Basic Skills and Enrichment Programs
 - ♦ Require Core and Exploratory Curriculum
 - ♦ Provide Co-Curricular/Extracurricular Opportunities
 - ♦ Implement Student Grading and Homework Policies
 - ♦ Create Small Learning Communities/Teaming Structures
 - ♦ Implement Multi-Year/Extended Learning Relationships
 - ♦ Implement a Flexible Instructional Schedule
 - ♦ Implement Student-Adult Advisement Opportunities
 - ♦ Implement Multiple Transition Practices to/from School
 - ♦ Provide Service Learning/Volunteerism/Health Services
- **Personnel Policies**
 - ♦ Recruit, Select, Retain, Develop, Dismiss Aggressively
 - ♦ Engage Staff in the Design/Implementation of Continuous Authentic and Relevant Professional Development
 - ♦ Align Teaching Assignments to Teacher Ability and Program Needs
 - ♦ Organize Staff by Teams and Content Areas
 - ♦ Provide Teacher and Team Planning Times
- **Student Policies**
 - ♦ Assign/Group Students Heterogeneously
 - ♦ Establish Attendance and Behavior Policies
- **Resource Allocation**
 - ♦ Align with Vision/Goals



Resources...

- Marzano: ASCD series on leadership, instruction, classroom management
- Cotton: ASCD on principal leadership and student achievement
- NASSP: Breaking Ranks series
- NASSP Decade Studies: Leadership for Highly Successful ML Schools
- Fullan (*Breakthrough*)
- Hoy: www.coe.ohio-state.edu/whoy/
- Leithwood: *Making Schools Smarter*
- *Middle Level Leadership Center Website: www.MLLC.org*

Contact Information

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