Chicago Public Schools (CPS) Systems To Support Administrators Plan

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A THREE-PART DISSERTATION:

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Change Leadership Project Plan

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This document was created as one part of the three-part dissertation requirement of the National Louis University (NLU) Educational Leadership (EDL) Doctoral Program. The National Louis Educational Leadership EdD is a professional practice degree program (Shulman et al., 2006).

For the dissertation requirement, doctoral candidates are required to plan, research, and implement three major projects, one each year, within their school or district with a focus on professional practice. The three projects are:

- Program Evaluation
- Change Leadership Plan
- Policy Advocacy Document

For the Program Evaluation candidates are required to identify and evaluate a program or practice within their school or district. The “program” can be a current initiative; a grant project; a common practice; or a movement. Focused on utilization, the evaluation can be formative, summative, or developmental (Patton, 2008). The candidate must demonstrate how the evaluation directly relates to student learning.

In the Change Leadership Plan candidates develop a plan that considers organizational possibilities for renewal. The plan for organizational change may be at the building or district level. It must be related to an area in need of improvement, and have a clear target in mind. The candidate must be able to identify noticeable and feasible differences that should exist as a result of the change plan (Wagner et al., 2006).

In the Policy Advocacy Document candidates develop and advocate for a policy at the local, state or national level using reflective practice and research as a means for supporting and promoting reforms in education. Policy advocacy dissertations use critical theory to address moral and ethical issues of policy formation and administrative decision making (i.e., what ought to be). The purpose is to develop reflective, humane and social critics, moral leaders, and competent professionals, guided by a critical practical rational model (Browder, 1995).

Works Cited


6.20.16
Abstract

Wagner et al.'s (2010) change leadership model was used to assess culture, context, conditions, and competencies of a large, diverse urban school district to create a systemic plan for supporting building level administrators. Interviews were conducted with former building level administrators, teachers, and staff who worked with building level administrators within the district. Results indicated overwhelming support for the building level administrators in the district. Strategies for implementation included: creating professional learning communities, leading adult learning, and developing leadership capacity. To achieve the much-needed changes, CPS personnel must be ready for a complete change in thinking, and it will take time. The change plan detailed how to reinforce best practices with building level administration.
Preface

I was a building level administrator for Chicago Public School (CPS) for five years. My job responsibilities included more work than I could ever have imagined. I came to CPS from the suburbs, and had been trained in best practices, and implementing systems through a continuous cycle of improvement. The work I had done prior to CPS was rooted in teaming and collaboration. While at CPS, I worked in one of the lowest performing schools in the state. Through these practices we could turn the school around. It was extremely more difficult to implement these systems within CPS. During my tenure at CPS, I learned a great deal about the characteristics of successful implementation of best practices, as well as characteristics of unsuccessful efforts. One aspect of the work that stands out the most is the need for a plan to support building level administration.

The culture at CPS is we were implementing PLCs. What CPS had done was to create their own paradigm of what a PLC should look like. Instead of starting at the root of best practices for PLCs, and implementing those practices, the district implemented practices, and then referred to those practices as part of a PLC. Individuals would go to trainings outside of the district and discuss PLCs with non-CPS professionals, causing confusion for CPS staff.

Having been trained in PLCs prior, I was aware that what was being promoted as PLCs at CPS were, in fact, not. There was a need within CPS for quality professional development, led by experts in overall best practices. This would help create a culture wherein leaders design their own learning, as well as work together utilizing adult learnings, and other work to develop leadership capacities. Using the Ways of Knowing
will enhance and encourage accomplishment of this change in thinking for CPS (Drago-Severson, 2009).
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract .............................................................................................................................. iii

Preface ............................................................................................................................... iv

List of Tables ................................................................................................................... viii

List of Figures .................................................................................................................... ix

SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION .................................................................................. 1
   Statement of the Problem ............................................................................................. 1
   Rationale ......................................................................................................................... 3
   Goals ............................................................................................................................... 4
   Setting ............................................................................................................................. 5

SECTION TWO: ASSESSING THE 4 Cs ......................................................................... 7
   Introduction ..................................................................................................................... 7
   Competencies ................................................................................................................ 7
   Context ............................................................................................................................ 9
   Culture ........................................................................................................................... 10
   Conditions ..................................................................................................................... 11

SECTION THREE: METHODOLOGY .......................................................................... 13
   Research Design ............................................................................................................ 13
   Participants .................................................................................................................... 14
   Data Gathering Techniques ........................................................................................ 15
   Analyzing Data ............................................................................................................. 16

SECTION FOUR: RELEVANT LITERATURE ............................................................. 17
   Introduction ................................................................................................................... 17
   Building Professional Learning Communities .............................................................. 17
List of Tables

Table 1. Distinguishing Technical Challenges and Adaptive Challenges .....................25
List of Figures

Figure 1. Baseline 4-Cs Analysis for “As Is” .................................................................2

Figure 2. Baseline 4-Cs Analysis for “To Be” .............................................................3

Figure 3. CPS Principal Turnover 2012-2017 .............................................................30

Figure 4. [Six] 6 Essential Characteristics of a PLC. ..............................................41
SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Great leaders are awake, aware, and attuned to themselves, to others, and to the world around them. They commit to their beliefs, stand strong in their values, and live full passionate lives (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005, p. 3). With transient leadership over the past five years in CPS, building leadership has had many shifts in the type of support leaders receive. Even without such transient district and network leadership, it is challenging to create an environment of collaborative learning.

The number one problem I am trying to understand is how to bring stability and calmness to Chicago Public Schools by supporting building level leadership. I would like the district to put systems in place to help building level administrators remain mindful of their priorities, bearing in mind that the consistent shift in network and district level leadership is a huge distraction. One critical element to help schools is to support CPS building level leaders’ capacity and understanding of leadership best practices. Leadership hit many unnecessary roadblocks, when I was working personally as a building level administrator in CPS. With state and district mandates, supporting school level administrators’ leadership capacity is low on the list of priorities. There will be some unintended consequences that come from this shift in the district toward supporting building level administration. A great deal of administrators’ attention is directed toward student growth, student attainment, attendance, and compliance. Some will feel that a focus on the continuous cycle of improvement through Professional Learning Communities will take administrators away from the attention that they should be putting toward compliance-based tasks. By increasing the support provided to building level
leaders, the district can help their leaders utilize the continuous cycle of improvement to support student learning. Figures 1 and 2 below display the current reality and vision of the change plan.

**Figure 1.** Baseline 4-Cs Analysis for “As Is”. [Originated via Wagner et al., 2010]
Rationale

If building level leadership had a consistent vision from the network, there would not be so many shifts. When there is change in leadership, new programs, new curriculum, new culture, and climate systems are brought into the schools along with the new leadership. With healthy climate and culture, building level leadership would be able to spend more time on instructions rounds, quality programs, and quality professional development.

There is a great deal of turmoil surrounding CPS right now, including its well-known and ongoing budget crisis. It is important that the leaders remain in the moment.
in their buildings. With the many distractions outside of the building, it can be difficult to focus on the work in front of them. They should not wait for a crisis to reflect on what went wrong, or what steps they should have taken. There needs to be systems in place to proactively recognize when the staff is heading in a negative direction, and can enlist autonomy and independence of thought to put resources and energy into that work.

During my five years as a Chicago Public Schools building administrator I was pulled away from the work of being a mindful leader and implementing leadership best practices. I was taken away from the work of implementing research-based best practices such as can be found in Boyatzis and Mckee’s *Resonant Leadership* (2005), Heifetz, Linsky, and Grashow’s *Adaptive Leadership* (2014), Wagner et al.’s *Change Leadership* (2010), Drago-Severson’s *Leading Adult Learning* (2009) and Fullan’s *Change Leader* (2011). I could go as far as saying we were no longer principals; we had become compliance officers. CPS administration is sent countless spreadsheets from multiple departments, directing them to complete certain tasks in order so that they could be removed from the list of “non-compliant” schools. Building leaders need to be supported on shifting the focus back to the classroom, leading adult learning, and building leadership capacity.

**Goals**

The intended goals of the change plan are to develop realistic expectations and scope of work for building level administration (for example, assessment schedules, personal learning plans, medical compliance, CIWP [school improvement plan], REACH [teacher evaluation system], Culture and Climate, ILT [instructional leadership team], Teacher leadership), in order that building level administrators can connect with each
school with the knowledge of the status of the school. I will raise district awareness about the importance of new initiatives being provided in a timely manner to ensure administration can process and be prepared to answer and facilitate information with reliability and validity. Moreover, I will advocate to build Network Level Local School Councils and remove building level LSCs. This transformation will benefit administrators in granting them the time to focus on embedding research-based leadership best practices. Most importantly, I will support a building level administration shift from compliance to commitment. I believe that this can be accomplished via learning by doing. Building level administration being exposed to, being coached on, and living the Professional Learning Communities\(^1\) (PLC) cycle can assist in reaching these goals.

**Setting**

According to Chicago Public Schools website (CPS.edu), Chicago public schools is the fourth largest school district in the United States. In the 2015 school year, CPS consisted of 660 schools, including 484 elementary schools and 176 high schools. In 2016 there were 130 Charter Schools in the district. The district has approximately 396,000 students, of which 85% of are Latino or African-American. The student body includes 87% from low-income homes (CPS.edu, 2017).

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\(^1\) The professional learning community model flows from the assumption that the core mission of formal education is not simply to ensure that students are taught but to ensure that they learn. This simple shift—from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning—has profound implications for schools (Source from Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD). Retrieved from http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/may04/vol61/num08/What-Is-a-Professional-Learning-Community%C2%A2.aspx
CPS is unique in how it funds schools; it utilizes per pupil budgeting, state, and federal funds. The district is currently in financial crisis. The teachers’ union is working without a contract. There are talks of a strike in the future. The district functions with a mayor-appointed school board. The district is overseen by a Chief Executive Office and a Chief Educational Officer. The district also has a layer of support between the schools and central office. That support is referred to as Network support. There are currently 17 Networks. There are 41,579 staff positions, including 22,519 teachers and 545 principals.
SECTION TWO: ASSESSING THE 4 Cs

Introduction

The 4-Cs is a systematic approach to improving schools and organizations (Burke, 2004; Tozer, 2013; Wagner et al., 2010). It aids leaders in building a deep, broad, and comprehensive understanding of the organization requiring change. The 4-Cs in Wagner et al.'s Change Leadership (2010) are competencies, context, culture and conditions. Competencies are the repertoire of skills and knowledge that influence student learning. Conditions are the external architecture surrounding student learning, the tangible arrangements of time, space, and resources. Culture is the shared values, beliefs assumptions, expectation, and behaviors related to students and learning, teachers and teaching, instructional leadership, and the quality of relationships within and beyond the school. Conditions are the skills all students must meet to succeed as providers, learners, and citizens and aspirations, need, and concerns of the families and community that the school or district serves (Wagner et al., 2010). I have used this framework to gain a better understanding of the state of support for building level administrators in CPS.

Competencies

One of major components that drives the work of building level administration is the School Quality Rating Policy. CPS uses a rating system to identify a school’s progress toward reaching specific goals. The School Quality Rating Policy (SQRP), is the Chicago Public Schools Board of Education’s policy for evaluating school performance based on several factors. Through this method, each school receives both an annual School Quality Rating and an Accountability Status. Among other things, the SQRP helps to communicate to school stakeholders the academic success, or lack thereof,
of individual schools and the district. This system guides the Board’s decision-making processes concerning school support and potential interventions. This rating system weighs heavily on attendance, student growth and attainment through NWEA\textsuperscript{2} data. When building administrators can focus on these three areas, they are able to generate a school performing at a higher level. The SQRP drives the work at the building level to focus on growth in ELA (English Language Arts) and Mathematics, as well as student attendance. The SQRP is a five-tiered performance ratings system based on a broad range of indicators of success, including, but not limited to, student test scores performance, student academic growth, closing of achievement gaps, school culture and climate, attendance, graduation, and preparation for post-graduation success.

The scope of work for building level administrators in CPS is not viable; many of the directives come from individuals removed from the work in the building. Although some of the ideas, programs, and initiatives are rooted in best practice, the implementation is impracticable. There are limited resources at the building level, and no funds to pay individuals to drive the work. Much of the work we do, such as school improvement plan writings, is done on a voluntary basis. Leaders are attempting to build teams to drive work, but are overwhelmed with the amount of work that must be accomplished.

Throughout the district there is inconsistent curricula, a lack of progress monitoring, and no MTSS\textsuperscript{3} systems. Students attending CPS are exposed to different systems at every school throughout the district. The district was divided, and lower

\begin{itemize}
\item NWEA: Northwest Evaluation Association
\item MTSS: Multi-tiered System of Support
\end{itemize}

\textit{Change Leadership Project Plan}
performing schools were not providing consistent best practices around instruction and resources provided to implement those best practices through leadership competencies.

Adult Learning has been focused on implementing REACH (teacher evaluation system), assessments, legal compliance, Common Core, EL compliance, and instructional best practices the last five years. We have been exposed to no professional development, adult culture and climate, or change leadership training. There have been talk of professional learning community implementation training, but there has not been any training in this arena.

**Context**

District level leadership is complex. CPS has a Chief Executive Officer and a Chief Education Officer. The Chief Executive Officer is at the top of the flow chart (see Appendix B). Although the CEO has no educational experience, he oversees all the operations and implementation of programs within the district. The CEO has a cabinet of a Senior Advisor, Chief of Accountability, Chief of Diverse Learners, Chief of Language and Culture, and Chief of Teacher and Learning. Under the cabinet, there are 67 departments ranging from the Office of Safety and Security to the Office of Social and Emotional Learning. Between building level principals and central office there are the offices of Network Support; currently there are 17 Network Offices. The Network Offices range in the number of schools they support and how they engage in such support. Each Network Office has a Network Chief that the accompanying principals report to.

Building Level administration receives countless directives from all CPS departments, Network Offices, and Central Office Cabinet. It is problematic for building
leadership to be successful with countless directives arriving from a multitude of sources. There is no clear flow chart structure in place to support leadership. All directives do not flow through the Network Office. The structures are in place, but the structures need to be utilized.

There is also a Local School Council in each school. The Local School Council hires principals and works with the principals like most district school boards. They also are responsible for evaluating the principal in conjunction with the Network Chief’s evaluations. The Local School Council is composed of teachers, staff, parents, and community members. The unique component of the LSC is that principals must navigate managing individuals who evaluate them. CPS leaders spend many hours navigating, supporting, and working with individual Local School Councils. The amount of community and parent involvement varies from school to school. The ability and capacity to implement leadership best practices also varies from school to school. CPS has a Department of Family and Community Engagement which is used broadly to support the Local School Council.

**Culture**

Currently there is a budget crisis in CPS. CPS students make up 20% of the state’s enrollment, and Chicagoans contribute 20% of the state income tax. Nonetheless, CPS is only receiving only 15% of the state’s total funding (CPS.edu, 2015). Building level administrators need to work with stakeholders to support equal state funding. With increased funding the administrators would be able to provide increased support to stakeholders. A majority of school’s funds are allocated to funding staffing. Most
schools are unable to provide needed programs and enrichment that would improve the culture of the schools.

Many schools in CPS are currently utilizing Safe Passage routes designed to provide safe routes for students while traveling to and from school (Celeste, 2013). Each identified school requiring Safe Passage will have a uniquely tailored strategy, which will take into consideration that school's community, popular modes of student transportation, arrival and dismissal times, and student residences. With school closings, there have been many students required to walk on their way to school through neighborhoods that have conflicting gang affiliation. Students are arriving to school under a great deal of stress. After incidents or altercations happen enroute to schools, there are no allocated supports for administrators to utilize to support the students.

**Conditions**

Many schools in CPS are struggling with simple implementation of district and state mandated testing (i.e. NWEA, PARCC, mClass, TRC, ISBE Science, etc.), whereas various schools are implementing computer science for all curriculum. The number one roadblock to mandated testing and curriculum is access to functioning technology to implement these programs. CPS contracted with Aramark and SodexoMagic for custodial and nutritional services. Even though building level administration does not oversee the implementation of these contracts or supervise the employees, the work of the implementation has fallen on building level administration.

Administrators receive countless compliance-based emails and directives from the 67 departments in CPS. These 67 departments work in silos, and are detached from the actual work being done in the buildings. It is a problematic for building level
administrators to receive directives and authority from so many departments. Network Chiefs are appointed from the central office; however, it is unclear what the exact process is for hiring Network Chiefs. Network Chiefs come in and go in the system. In my five years as a building level administrator, I have worked with eight different Network Chiefs. Each time the cycle of building trust and collaboration must begin anew. It is very challenging for building level administration to institute change at the building level, when there is transient upper level leadership.
SECTION THREE: METHODOLOGY

Research Design

I leveraged Michael Patton’s (2008) *Utilization-Focused Evaluation*\(^4\) in my research. I conducted qualitative interviews to gain a deeper understanding of building level administrators and the support they receive. The findings from the qualitative data were deep and rich. Some findings were more profound than others. These findings will be discussed below.

The questions for interviews were formed through the lens of face validity. Patton (2008) states, “you look at the operationalization and see whether ‘on its face’ it seems like a good translation of the construct” (p. 589). My research design utilized a mixed method approach and focused on the *Empirical Analytical* as well as the *Constructivist-Interpretivist* paradigms. Through this research method I intend to use the data to prompt a change plan that will serve as a roadmap to transform Chicago Public Schools (CPS). I studied how administrators could better utilize the resources provided by the district and available to them within the district. I interviewed former CPS employees, and I analyzed resources provided to the schools via interviews and public documents. More specifically, I examined what supports the former CPS principals received, how they felt about the supports, and what they would have like to have seen different. I also inquired about professional development and support with implementing

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\(^{4}\) Utilization-Focused Evaluation (UFE) is an approach based on the principle that an evaluation should be judged on its usefulness for its intended users. Therefore, evaluations should be planned and conducted in ways that enhance the likely utilization of both the findings and of the process itself to inform decisions and improve performance. Sourced from http://www.betterevaluation.org/.
research-based leadership best practices from the district. The majority of the data that stimulates and galvanizes my change plan will be qualitative.

**Participants**

The participants of my study were former CPS administration and Network staff, selected purposefully:

Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term purposeful sampling. Studying information-rich cases yields insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations. For example, if the purpose of an evaluation is to increase the effectiveness of a program in reaching lower-socioeconomic groups, one may learn a great deal more by studying in depth a small number of carefully selected poor families than by gathering standardized information from a large, statistically representative sample of the whole program. Purposeful sampling focuses on selecting information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study. (Patton, 2002, p. 273)

By interviewing former CPS staff, I developed a better understanding of how administrators were supported during their leadership roles at CPS. Additionally, I addressed any existing personal biases, as well as potential biases of the participants, related to experiences with CPS. It is vital for the researcher to be cognizant of the participants’ (as well as the researcher’s) bias and worldview, which is naturally present in social research, whether intentional or not (Fields & Kafai, 2009). I also gathered data at the building level from the CPS.edu profile page. Furthermore, I gathered data by looking at the quantitative information provided by the district CPS Leaders website.
(http://cps.edu/leadership/Pages/leadership.aspx). It was important to capture that data, as it allowed me to draw a more detailed picture of how administrators are supported.

The interview participants ranged from ages 35-50. They were both male and female, and consisted of a racially diverse group. They were all working in different types of districts or held different roles outside of the district. However, they all had experience with Chicago Public Schools. I will be very transparent about the change leadership project plan. Avoiding undue discomfort or embarrassment to those who participated in my change plans was very important. I was acutely aware to make sure that no harm or political consequences came to the people who provided information for my change plan. That is why I chose to gather qualitative data from individuals that no longer work with CPS. I reached out to the participants via phone call. In my initial phone call, I described the change plan that I am working on, and advised them that I would be interested in getting their perspective. I also communicated to them that their participation would be voluntary. If they indicate that they were interested, I emailed them the informed consent and asked each of them to return a signed copy prior to the scheduled interview.

**Data Gathering Techniques**

I interviewed five former CPS employees. I reached out to the former CPS employees based on the type of work they performed while active within the district. I telephoned them personally and directly to request permission to interview them about their experiences. The participants of my change plan study were former CPS principals, assistant principals, and network support employees. I selected participants based on my knowledge of them as former CPS employees, and furthermore that they were part of my

*Change Leadership Project Plan*
professional network. By interviewing former CPS staff, I gained a better understanding of how administrators required support.

**Analyzing Data**

By analyzing the public available data about supports for administrators in CPS, I gained a fuller understanding of the supports, which has helped to place my interviews within the context of the support. When analyzing the data, I used the strategy of coding interviews. The coding of the interviews was performed in a way that was very beneficial for me. I created a unique coding system because of specific verbiage used only used CPS. I also placed the data collected from the cps.edu in charts. Finally, I searched for common findings in the public data analysis to support, or not support, the findings from the qualitative data collected. I analyzed the data, always keeping in mind the purpose of the change plan.
SECTION FOUR: RELEVANT LITERATURE

Introduction

There is a great deal of literature that can be applied on how to “fix” CPS. Institutions and researchers have poured through the literature to support their opinions on solutions for the district. The solutions have become as complex as the district itself. We have moved away from simple best practices that make great districts great. I am not sure if CPS has ever utilized simple best practices. I am not able to find any research that suggests that the district has ever been “fixed.” The district needs to support principals in building Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), leading adult learning, and building leadership capacity.

Building Professional Learning Communities

Richard Dufour (2004) states that individuals learn by doing, and furthermore if we are not learning by doing, we are not in a PLC. A PLC is a living and breathing group of educators utilizing SMART Goals and the PLC cycle to perform their work. Labeling a team as a PLC does not qualify it as a professional learning community. PLC’s focus on learning. They do not spend time discussing compliance-based tasks, operational procedures, or pessimistic discussions that take the conversation away from student learning. The individuals focus on learning for all. We no longer work in silos. We come together to achieve our SMART goal and everyone is included in the process. They utilize collective inquiry to build shared knowledge and move away from the traditional pooling of opinions. One of the most important characteristics of a PLC is that they are action-orientated. They are learning by doing. Through this learning there is a commitment to continuous improvement.
Leading Adult Learning

Eleanor Drago-Severson’s *Leading Adult Learning* (2009) provides effective practices for supporting adult development in our schools. The first step is to understand how we know. We all process information differently and have certain needs that must be met for us to build our capacity. Drago-Severson utilizes Robert Kegan’s (1982, 1994, 2000) constructive-development theory to help building our understanding how each one of us individually develop during adult learning. As leaders, we need to support our staff to transition from rule-based learning to interconnected learning. Many of us are unable to shift through the stages of the constructive-developmental theory because we are not given time to reflect on our practice. We are expected to perform without any guidance or coaching through our adult learning. We need district administration to model the type of leadership they would like to see. The expectation is to be dynamic collaborative administrators. It is communicated to meet with stakeholders and to seek to understand. The authoritative top down leadership is being modeled to the building level administrators.

Drago-Severson (2009) developed the *Ways of Knowing*, included in her book *Leading Adult Learning: Supporting Adult Development in Our Schools*. The *Ways of Knowing* help guide our staff from being instrumental learners to self-transforming. In the instrumental stage individuals depends on rules and want to know what is the right thing to do. In the self-transforming stage the individual is committed to self-exploration. The individual is engaging in conflict to enhance the team's learning. They seek out other people’s thinking to increase the capacity of themselves and the organization. Depending on the topic, situation or professional development individuals can shift from
instrumental, socializing, self-authoring, or self-forming. The goal when leading adult learning is to find ways to support adult development in way that creates a culture of self-transforming adult learners.

*Leading Adult Learning* explains potential ways adults experience teaming based on their knowing. The types of knowers react differently not only with their individual learning, but how they support and challenge each other's growth. By recognizing the needs of every individual, we can support adults in how they grow and support the team. When supporting the growth of instrumental learners on a team we need to set clear expectations and guidelines for teamwork. However, self-transforming learners need opportunities wherein there is a lack of restriction for deep inquiry and self-expression. Just like teachers are expected to differentiate instruction in the classroom, leaders need to differentiate the support of adults, as the culture shifts to individuals becoming self-transforming (Drago-Severson, 2009).

Lastly, leaders need to understand how adults with different ways of knowing orient to receiving feedback. Drago-Severson points out how we need to help adult learners transition their thinking when receiving feedback. Instrumental knowers are concerned with what is important to them and getting it “right.” They want to know what they did right or what they did wrong. As we move help adults grow in receiving feedback, we help the transform to a place where they are accepting that they are not able to solve every problem and conflict. They recognize when they need to hold back in hierarchical system and structures. It is important that leaders recognize that some adults will be easier to support than others. At times, it can be that we simply do not understand their way of knowing. Leaders need to develop a complete understanding of all the ways
of knowing to best support each individual adult in their way of knowing (Drago-Severson, 2009).

Building level administrators need to be the instructional leaders of the building. Principals can also lead adult learning by putting the focus back in the classroom. Most teachers are ill-prepared to structure and deliver high-quality classroom instruction (Tomlinson & Allan, 2006, p. 36). With the plethora of compliance-based systems it is challenging to support the crucial work that is happening in the classrooms. When we can focus on supporting the teachers learning on how to create classroom where students are being coached, instead of taught, we can see classrooms revitalize. We function in a world that provides little time for reflection, coaching, peer observations, discussion, and training in the arena of our classroom teaching practices. Teachers are continually handling paradigm shifts that arrive from the central office and policy makers. Most principals have risen through the system, and are not equipped with the tools to lead required adult learning in their schools, to properly develop high quality curriculum and instruction.

Many times, we see operational changes to lead adult learning. Being able to implement functional operational systems is a key pillar in being a successful administrator in CPS. Unfortunately, we see operational changes being forced into schools from the network level. For example, if block scheduling can help do that (engage students in the classroom), then we may elect block scheduling-not because of popularity, but because we are clear on how it would join with other facets of best-practice instruction to make learning more compelling for more students and their teachers (Tomlinson & Allan, 2006, p. 34). Schools, teachers, and students’ schedules
are consistently being uprooted by the Network Office. Many times, individuals far from the classrooms will mandate schedule changes or restructure a content area block. Teachers mid-year will have to take a hard shift and follow a new routine of bell ringers, math talks, small groups, and independent differentiated tasks. These are rooted in best practices. One important component is missing. We are not leading adult learning in these practices. Administrators are expected to support the teachers in the classrooms and their adult learning is not supported as well. It is a vicious cycle of implementing best practices without proper support that results in students being exposed to low-quality curriculum and instruction.

If our teachers are feeling overwhelmed and not supported, it can only naturally trickle down to the students. We are dealing with human beings. The teachers in Chicago are an amazing collective group of individuals. They go through shift after shift, after shift, and continue to support the students in the classroom. One way to administrators can support teachers is to encourage them to support the students. The teachers can have autonomy to turn students into teachers. This is difficult with all the pressure of the gradual release model echoed throughout the district, network, buildings, and classrooms. Students can still take the lead and support their peers through the lens of: I do. We do. You do. One of the best ways to know whether you have mastered something is to try to teach it (Pink, 2012). With accountability and competition, which I will cover later, it is quite challenging for building level administration to support teachers within the timeframe needed, and to delve deeply into a concept and topic to the point where students are developing mastery. In his book entitled *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*, Daniel Pink maintains that a classroom of teachers is a
classroom of learners (2012). If building level administrators are not leading adult learning, how can we expect the opposite in the classrooms? If we want to see best practices in the classroom, administration needs to model these best practices.

**Best Practices in Building Leadership Capacity**

One challenge that all leaders face is successfully changing an organization to function in a positive context. This is very broad statement, but also quite simple. No true leader walks into an organization wanting to have a negative impact; meaningful change is intricate, complicated, and takes time. Robbins and Alvy (2003) found the following: “Because change is holistic, every aspect of the organizational system has the potential to be affected. This underscores the importance of systematic thinking; that is, that changes in one part of the system have an impact on others” (p. 67). Any change that is made can impact the entire organization. However, one way to promote successful change is to develop trust. If trust is not built it can be very challenging for the organization to support or accept any changes. When making changes performance usually dips then gets better. Without trust administrators and individuals implementing the change are less likely to risk making changes. It is more comfortable to stick with what you know and not change course. It is difficult to strengthen leadership capacity when change and growth are not encouraged.

There are many CPS leaders who need to be trained in and supported to utilize strengthening leadership capacities. Applicable theories of leadership include: Heifetz et al.’s (2014) *Adaptive Leadership*, Boyatzis and McKee’s (2005) *Resonant Leadership*, and Wagner et al.’s *Change Leadership* (2010). Among others, these texts are indispensable guides in providing frameworks for educational leaders to analyze the
complex work of school change, steering educators through development of their practice as agents of change in a complex and adaptive environment. In particular, Boyatzis and McKee (2005) provide an essential model as to how leader can begin to overcome the vicious cycle of stress, sacrifice, and dissonance that afflicts many leaders:

Resonant leaders are in tune with those around them. This results in people working in collaboration with each other, in tune with each other’s thoughts (what to do) and emotions (why to do it). Leaders who can create resonance are people who either intuitively understand or have worked hard to develop emotional intelligence – namely, the competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. They act with mental clarity, not simply following a whim or an impulse (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005, p. 16).

These works exemplify a new and powerful approach to leadership in schools, which, in turn, benefits building level administrators within districts such as CPS. They help equip the administrators with the necessary tools to lead, as they impart modern methodologies of leadership in the 21st century. This can be done through mindfulness, self-reflection, and implementation of best practices (Jayan, Bing, & Musa, 2016).

Moreover, to see the organization clearly and honestly, the leader must first be able to see himself or herself clearly and honestly. Within the organization leaders ought to identify competing loyalties. The three ‘circles’ of an individual’s loyalties are:

1. *Colleagues* (boss, peers, subordinates.)
2. *Community* (family, friends, social, political.)
3. *Ancestors* (revered grandparents, special teacher and groups who form your gender, religion, ethnicity, or national roots.) (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009).
In an organization such as CPS, a competing loyalty that some struggle with is being in the position of a principal; sometimes the principal is wrong. As a defense mechanism, we can find ourselves defending the principal, simply because he/she is the principal. We do not put an equal amount of energy into different lenses or categories. We over-emphasize certain loyalties that inhibit our ability to lead. Teachers can also struggle with this, particularly when it comes to the union, whereas chiefs grapple with competing loyalties in situations with board or CEO/CEdO directives. Schools can be chaotic, and individuals can fall into the trap of justifying that they are not the reason for such chaos. We need to do a better job of owning our behaviors which may contribute to the disorder or confusion. By recognizing that conflicting loyalties may be holding us back can be a very valuable tool. We sometimes make decisions based on our loyalties out of fear that we will jeopardize those association that mean a great deal to us. At times there can be pain, or there has already been pain, for not supporting a certain loyalty. When we recognize that they exist, we can prevent ourselves from heading down that path, thus avoiding more pain.

Additionally, schools tend to manage adaptive challenges and technical challenges in the same way. The table below illustrates different types of solutions for technical problems, adaptive problems or challenges or the combination of both technical and adaptive challenges for different types of situations. Type I, or what Heifetz, Kania, and Kramer (2004) describe as technical challenges may be very complex and critically important, but they have known solutions that can be implemented by current best practices (Heifetz et al., 2009).

Table 1.
Distinguishing Technical Challenges and Adaptive Challenges.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Kind of challenge</th>
<th>Problem definition</th>
<th>Solution</th>
<th>Locus of work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type I</td>
<td>Technical</td>
<td>Clear</td>
<td>Clear</td>
<td>Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type II</td>
<td>Technical and adaptive</td>
<td>Clear</td>
<td>Requires learning</td>
<td>Authority &amp; stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type III</td>
<td>Adaptive</td>
<td>Requires learning</td>
<td>Require learning</td>
<td>Stakeholders</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Suggested by: (Heifetz et al., 2004; Heifetz et al., 2009; Linsky & Lawrence, 2011)].

On the other hand:

there is a whole host of problems that are not amenable to authoritative expertise or standard operating procedures. They cannot be solved by someone who provides answers from on high. We call these adaptive challenges because they require experiments, new discoveries, and adjustments from numerous places in the organization or community. Without learning new ways – changing attitudes, values, and behaviours – people cannot make the adaptive leap necessary to thrive in the new environment. The sustainability of change depends on having the people with the problem internalize the change itself (Heifetz & Linsky, 2008, p. 6).

Thus, seeing leadership as a complex and adaptive process brings attention to the social complexities of leadership in contemporary organizations, such as CPS. 21st century leadership theories inform us to move beyond hierarchical, individualistic, one-directional, and de-contextualized notions of leadership (DeRue, 2011).

As noted, Boyatzis and McKee (2005) posit that dissonance is more common than resonance; poor leadership is evident more often than good, so much so that dissonance has become the default mode. We can easily become caught up in a seductive spiral of
blaming others, and engaging in self-sacrificing behaviors as our primary response to the inherent stress of leadership. When we take situations and people's feelings personally, we shift into being a dissonant leader. We start to slide down into sacrifice syndrome, a vicious circle leading to mental and physical distress, and sometimes even burnout, wherein most leaders will be unable to recover.

Leadership-development professionals will be called on to deliver strategies that better integrate agility, business context and environment, change, culture, innovation, leadership, networked organizations and communities, talent, and transformation - these are the organizational capabilities that are essential ingredients for current and future business success (McLaughlin & Ziskin, 2016). This reminds us that the same things we did in the past might not help us to be successful in our current situation. When old systems are not working, we tend to avoid people and situations that will get in the way of the work we feel is necessary. Hard work is usually one of the first defense mechanisms. We find ourselves in management positions because we are hard workers. True leaders work with the individual people instead of at the individual task. We set goals, create plans, and keep a laser-tight focus on that work. When working the plan, we must listen to the individuals on our team. It is easy to pull on the lever that people are being hypercritical or lazy. There is no one size fits all system successful organizations.

The sacrifice syndrome is a tough pill to swallow. Some of us have experienced or worked directly with someone who has fallen in the pitfalls of the sacrifice syndrome. There are many lessons in these chapters to help us as leaders to avoid the sacrifice syndrome. A balanced personal life and work are crucial. The cycle of sacrifice and renewal is not sustainable. We must be healthy and happy in our current state. Taking a
trip to the Bahamas is wonderful, but the toxic work environment we created as leaders will be there waiting for us. To sustain emotional intelligence, we must attend to ourselves (See Appendix A). The key is to avoid the sacrifice syndrome is to continue to work on ourselves and to change our behavior. This can be very challenging for building level administrators in CPS.

One effective leadership best practice is service based leadership. Service based leadership is a shift in CPS leadership. It transforms a leader from control to service. Wald and Castleberry (1999) define interdependence as the perception that one is linked with others in such a way that the success of one depends on the success of others and that the work of each person benefits the whole (p. 120). If the leaders of CPS are consistently coming from a place of control how can they expect building level administration to navigate their roles from one of service and interdependence. Wald and Castleberry add that a leader who serves also allows the staff to make key decision about their work with children. When initiative come along, staff are allotted time to study them, talk about them, experiment with them in the classroom, and reflect on their efficacy (Wald & Castleberry, 1999, p. 24). Some directives and initiatives need to come top down. We do not have the resources and time to build consensus on every decision we make. The literature supports and encourages leaders to utilize service based leadership whenever possible. When leaders utilize this leadership style we can strengthen building level administrators’ capacity to support the staff and build school based leaders. This practice also helps support accountability and a shift from “gotcha” to authentic buy-in.
Hoerr (2005) describes accountability as two distinct movements coming together to heighten responsibility and a competitive environment of schools. These movements are (1) an increasing use of quantitative analysis in judging schools, and (2) greater school choice for parents. Anyone can access the current state of a CPS school. The School Quality Rating Policy (SQRP) is the district’s policy for measuring annual school performance. The SQRP is a five-tiered performance system based on a broad range of indicators of success including, but not limited to, student test score performance, student academic growth, closing of achievement gaps, school culture and climate, attendance, graduation, and preparation for post-graduation success. When you look at the list closely you will see that all, but one item, are quantitative factors. Hoerr’s description of accountability is supported by an accountability matrix used in CPS (2005). Hoerr also touches on choices of school for parents and students. There are many factors that go into choosing a school in CPS. Families look at class size, test scores, school atmosphere, proximity to their homes, before- and after-school programs, specific academic focus, and charter schools. All students in CPS have access to their neighborhood school. Currently there are 125 charter schools (57 elementary 68 high schools) for families to choose from. (See Appendix A.) Being a Level 1+ school in the CPS five-tiered performance system forces building level administrators to focus on the quantitative analysis used to judge their schools. According to Hoerr (2005), “principals will need to have marketing expertise” (p. 184). There is increased pressure to market the school from the building level. I will go into more detail on how this impacts CPS leadership in the next section.
SECTION FIVE: DATA ANALYSIS and INTERPRETATION

The interpretation of the data begins with the quantitative data. As seen in Figure 3 below, over the past five school years there has been an increasing number of principal turnover in Chicago Public Schools. Most recently, 119 schools started the year with new building level leadership (Chicago Public Education Fund, 2016). The majority of these schools also brought in or replaced their assistant principals. Until recently, CPS assistant principals were tied to the principals four year contracts. In urban settings, it is increasingly important to have leadership that is consistent and sustainable. The transition from one principal to the next can assist incoming leadership to continue to move the school from point A to point B. Only a few schools have had transition plans that incorporated past principals working with current principals.

![CPS Principal Turnover 2012-2017](image)

*Figure 3. CPS Principal Turnover 2012-2017. [Sourced from (Chicago Public Education Fund, 2016)].*
The Chicago Public Educational Fund Also Polled Current CPS Principals

Per the results of the survey the turnover trends could continue. Twenty percent of principals are looking to leave CPS, translating to more than 130 principals leaving their schools. In addition to that 20 percent, 119 principals are potentially leaving their school because of retirement, or contract expirations. Of those 119 schools only 43 percent have a successor or transition plan. In addition, only 40 percent of principals stay in their role after five years. There is also a great deal of turnover in the support that principals receive from their direct supervisors, referred to as Network Chiefs. Sixty percent of the principals say they have a positive working relationship with their direct supervisor. Principals were asked about the compliance work that they were completing. 72 percent of the principals surveyed identified that balancing compliance work was the most difficult aspect of their job (Chicago Public Education Fund, 2016).

The Interviews

A group of five educators were interviewed individually to answer the primary research question. The purpose of the interviews was to look deeply into the results of the quantitative data. Even though a new tool was being used to determine schools’ levels, we needed to determine if the support had changed. The interviews looked through the lens of support given to schools through the network office. The work done at the network level is driven from the district. For purposes of the discussion to follow, a total of five interviews were used including 2 principals, 1 assistant principal, 1 network instructional support leader, and 1 teacher. The interviews averaged 60 minutes in duration. The interviews of the administrators aligned with the quantitative data of the
Chicago Fund Study (2016). It was helpful to isolate the administrative and network qualitative data. The interviewees had various background knowledge and experience working within CPS. Findings from each discussion session are reported, along with challenges noted, additional observations (when applicable), and the interpretation of results.

The Principals’ Perspectives

Principal #1

As mentioned in the Program Evaluation (Alstadt, 2018), one principal interviewed did move his school from a Level 3 school to Level 1 over a period of four years. The principal stated that the “main strategies I used included professional development, team meetings, and one-on-one staff meetings.” This principal, Principal #1, furthermore noted that “… significant change and improvement within this school required that both staff - teachers, administrators - and community - parents, business, - were involved in the myriad of changes I was implementing.” Success was based on the ability to critically analyze the situation and acknowledge that “… change could never be sustained unless all those stakeholders were involved, both school staff and the community.” Most change efforts start and stop within the school, involving only teachers and staff, never really generating input from the other crucial constituents. Principal #1 achieved great success, and furthermore was able to stipulate what support was needed “… from the network and shared the authority for important decisions …” with those support personnel.

Principal #1’s feelings aligned with multiple data points from The Chicago Public Education Fund School Leadership Baseline Report results (2016). There was a great
deal of changes and shifting in Network and Central office leadership. While s/he was principal there were four chiefs and three CEOs. The principal felt that “… it was difficult to build relationships of support from the network and district because of the consistent change in leadership.” This aligns with the results of The Chicago Public Education Fund survey (2016). There were many different compliance-based systems that took the principal’s time and energy away from the identified needs of the schools. As mentioned, 72 percent of principals surveyed agreed that the most challenging component of their job was the compliance-based systems in CPS (Chicago Public Education Fund, 2016).

Principal #1 elaborated on the compliance-based systems, stating that much time “… was spent meeting with network staff to explain the current state of the school, new required documentation and spreadsheets, new SMART goals, and action plans, and major incidents that would happen in the school.” However, Principal #1 was also able to thwart those challenges by taking the time for “… one-on-one meetings with teacher and network staff to build rapport and to understand the challenges …” Principal #1 also acknowledged it was best to shelter the Assistant Principals and other staff from the compliance work that needed to be completed. S/he knew that the school would suffer if the teachers were mandated to complete the work that was being asked of them from the district. What this principal actually achieved was an autonomous formation of a learning community within the school, without actually labeling it as such. Unfortunately, Principal #1 eventually departed from CPS to work in a smaller school district.
Principal #2

Principal #2 experienced positive changes in the school as well, stating that “…the lens of quality support depends on the individual.” This was apparent through growth represented in the NWEA data. There was also a dramatic drop in out-of-school suspensions, and an increase in student attendance. Principal #2 cited evidence of teacher morale increases through “…yearly staff surveys and proactive professional development …” However, in contrast to Principal #1, Principal #2 depended greatly on support from the network, where “…change of the leadership of the network and central offices compounded confusion and directly caused disparities in the assistance the school received …” In addition, “I had eight network chiefs over a period of five years.” The ability of Principal #2 to make greater strides in achievement for the school was thwarted by the recurring change of network and administrative staff. Principal #2 resigned from CPS to pursue career advancement in another district.

The Assistant Principal’s Perspective

The Assistant Principal (AP) was fortunate to have worked with Principal #1, and witnessed first-hand what success looked like. He had supported three other Principals during his tenure of 10 years as AP. The AP, having worked with Principal #1, noted “…the key to success appeared to be in the way the principal led, and his/her strengths in valuable teacher recruitment, professional development and retention. These factors imparted teacher satisfaction, school effectiveness and improvement, and organizational learning.” However, much inspiration this AP garnered from working with Principal #1, and however much Principal #1 attempted to shelter the APs, this AP eventually sensed that his position was that of a compliance-officer, deluged with paperwork, and unable to
spend time directly with the teachers. He did eventually leave CPS, as he was relocating to another city.

**The Network Perspective**

This staff member noted that her job as an Instructional Support Leader (ISL), “… was understood to be that of a contributor of direct and differentiated instructional support through working face-to-face with teachers in the classroom. I was expected to model effective and best teaching practices … “, but rarely did the ISL actually meet with teachers. There were layers of processes and paperwork, and other network members depended on her assistance for a variety of projects, none of them directly related to ISL. “There were just too many schools to support and everyone was running on empty after a while.” So, while this ISL’s initial, and possibly naïve, assumptions as to what her position would be, she still believed that “… school staff must find time for thoughtful discussion, and to learn about educational best practices in this ever-changing landscape.” At one point during her short tenure as ISL, CPS modified her role and limited network leadership from direct intervention within the classroom. The staff member was relocating and was unable to continue at CPS after six years as ISL.

**The Teacher Perspective**

The teacher worked with CPS for three years, and while he was highly motivated and qualified, his reality was noted as: “We teachers were making instructional decisions in a very fluid context, including introduction of new policies, brainstorming ideas about learning and instruction, and assessment practices, as well as a multitude of programs that claimed to reflect new ideas.” There was no shortage of new ideas coming from the Principal and Administration, ultimately landing in the teachers’ domain. This teacher
yearned for positive change, and furthermore stated, “… educational practice will change only when teachers have the support they need to grasp the innumerable ideas and directives coming at them. While many of these ideas had value, they should have been delivered to the teacher in a meaningful way, and, as a team, they might have been constructed into a coherent method based around best practices.” This can be accomplished via professional development trainings, something all CPS staff members emphasized as a major missing component. Furthermore, there were little or no follow-up to the informal trainings that did take place, and those trainings were often related to compliance, processes, and informational-based; there were no trainings on learning, learners, or pedagogy, essential territory of all teachers’ work. Indeed, the teacher noted, “… it was all I could do to comply, survive, conform, or meet the next deadline ….” The teacher decided to leave the classroom and pursue a career in educational technology application consulting after three years of teaching at CPS.

**Interview Themes**

The common themes of the former CPS employees reflect a desire for change, and a great need for cohesive management of information and processes. The principals, as leaders of the schools, with assistance of APs and the network teams, must plan how to end what “used to be.” To heed the voices of these interviewees, CPS must change, as it analyzes potential barriers to change (including staff), as well as the need for influential leadership, effective planning, evaluation, and reevaluation (Lewin, 1951, 1960). Staff may fear the forfeiture of familiarity within the classrooms and the schools, along with their sense of self, and many of their consistent habits. However, change to a new educational model is the destination; for change to occur teachers and staff will require
adequate support and meaningful professional development. Furthermore, whatever work the administration and staff are performing should be propelled by the Professional Learning Community\(^5\) (PLC) cycle, discussed in detail in the *Program Evaluation* (Alstadt, 2018).

\(^5\) (Reiteration of footnote #1) The professional learning community model flows from the assumption that the core mission of formal education is not simply to ensure that students are taught but to ensure that they learn. This simple shift—from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning—has profound implications for schools (Source from Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD). Retrieved from http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/may04/vol61/num08/What-Is-a-Professional-Learning-Community\(^\text{C2}\text{A2}.aspx
SECTION SIX: A VISION OF SUCCESS (TO BE)

Introduction

The vision of success for this change plan is to advocate for CPS leaders’ necessity to be encouraged and supported on shifting their focus back to the classroom, leading adult learning, and building leadership capacity.

Competencies

One of major components that should propel the work of building level administration is utilizing the PLC cycle. The PLC cycle is rooted research-based best practices. It starts with writing a SMART Goal. SMART is an acronym for a specific type of goal-setting practice. The letters most often stand for specific, measureable, attainable, relevant, and timely. However, adaptations of SMART use S (simple, sensible, significant); M (meaningful, motivating); A (agreed, attainable); R (reasonable, realistic, resourced, results-based); T (time-based, time limited, time/cost limited, timely, time-sensitive) (Haughey, 2015).

Using these SMART goals allows the CPS leader to state strategies and tactics for achievement (Jakubik, 2016). To initiate the practice of SMART goals, leader within CPS must strive for goals which are clear and reachable; however, each one should minimally be achievable and measureable. The process starts with setting achievable monthly goals (Jakubik, 2016) via weekly meetings to foster reciprocal accountability. The measurement part of the process establishes clear definitions for clarification to understand if specific goals have reached. An important part of the process is to describe action-oriented goals by use of action verbs, such as decide, improve, and plan. As a team, CPS personnel must reflect and celebrate at the end of each successful goal.
Whatever work the administration is performing should be propelled by the PLC cycle. If the work does not require a SMART goal, it is compliance work. The next step of the cycle is setting targets. The administration, or team, should set targets, driven by data, that support the SMART goal. The next step in the process is to determine how to assess the work of the targets. Teachers are expected to utilize this cycle in the classroom. Our administrations should be living and championing this cycle. After assessing the targets, they need to evaluate the data from the assessments. Through this data analysis, the administrator will determine what interventions, if any, are needed to support the SMART goal. After implementing the interventions, they will need to reflect on the current state of the target or celebrate the completion of the SMART goal.

If the SMART goal is not achieved, new targets are set, and the cycle starts over. If the SMART goal is a long-range goal, many revolutions through the cycle may be required. We learn by doing. If administrators are utilizing the cycle to propel their work, they will be able to support the teachers and teams in their buildings. The PLC should be used by all administration in CPS, regardless of title or level. By using this cycle individuals who support principals can better support them in the work they do. This will ensure that directives would shift from compliance-based to commitment-based. Building level administration will be able to spend their time developing PLCs to compel high quality work is being accomplished. The district should support building level administration with consistent curriculum, progress monitoring, or MTSS systems. Students in CPS should be exposed to consistent systems at every school throughout the district. This would help support building level administration to have consistent verbiage around important systems and the Professional Learning Communities at work.
Adult Learning should focus on coaching and the different elements of the PLC cycle. Targets should be set for the principals and the cycle should be modeled through this process. Everything we do should be through the lens of learning by doing. If it is not, it is something that can be communicated in an email, an online seminar, or a one-pager. Compliance is part of our professions, but we should not be using professional development time for compliance-based training.

**Context**

District level leadership is very complex in urban settings. CPS should have a Chief Executive Officer and a Chief Education Officer. The Chief Executive Officer should oversee the district. It is not necessary for the CEO to have educational experience. The CEO does need to have a strong cabinet with educational experience to advise the CEO on union relations, curriculum implementation, state mandated and local assessments, special education, and legal concerns. The CEO should oversee all the operations and implementation of programs in the district. CPS, and other urban districts, is a massive system. Someone with strong operational experience is needed to ensure that that educational research based best practices are being implemented at the local (school) level. The CEO should then have licensed superintendents supporting the individual schools.

Each school would be in a smaller district, within the large urban school district. These smaller districts would support the principals, and the superintendents would meet and advise the CEO on how to support the schools within their district. These district superintendents would have superintendent licenses, and would furthermore need to complete a one-year internship outside of CPS. This would expose District
Superintendents to best practices and experiences external of CPS in order that they bring to the table best practices learned while interning in an unconnected district. Ideally, this paradigm would support a change in the existing dysfunctional practices learned while working within the CPS.

Building level administration would receive directives from one source. That would come from the district superintendent office. Building leadership would be able to collaborate with the other departments. Departments would no longer communicate directives and compliance-based work to the building level administration. There would be a clear flow chart structure in place to support leadership through the superintendent district offices and various CPS departments.

There also will be a Local District Council, which hires district superintendents and works with the principals, similar to most district school boards. They would also be responsible for evaluating the District Superintendent in conjunction with the District Evaluation system. The Local District Council (LDC) would be composed of not CPS members, but rather of community members. A unique component of the LDC is that principals will be able to collaborate with the council, a huge shift from the existing standard wherein LSCs evaluate the principal. Furthermore, building level administrators will no longer spend many hours navigating, supporting, and working with individual Local School Councils. This time could be allocated to building community engagement and parent involvement. Building level administration will also be able to spend more time collaborating the Department of Family and Community Engagement, a department used broadly to support the Local School Council. That department would now be able to engage with the needs of the community.
Culture

CPS students make up 20% of the state’s enrollment, Chicagoans contribute 20% of the state income tax. CPS is should receive 20% of the state’s total funding. Building level administrators work with stakeholders to support equal state funding. With increased funding the administrators would be able to provide increased support to stakeholders. This support helps improve the culture of the schools.

Many schools in CPS are currently utilizing Safe Passage routes (Associated Press, 2014; Celeste, 2013). Safe Passage is designed to provide safe routes for students traveling to and from school. Each identified school will have a uniquely tailored strategy, which will take into consideration that school’s community, popular modes of student transportation, arrival and dismissal times, and student residences. With numerous school closings, there have been many students that are required to walk through neighborhoods that have conflicting gang affiliation. Such students are arriving to school under a great deal of stress. If an incident or altercation happens en route to school, there are supports for administrators to utilize to assist the distressed student.

Conditions

Schools in CPS are will be supported in the implementation of district and state mandated testing (i.e., NWEA, PARCC, mClass, TRC, and ISBE Science). Many schools will implement computer science for all curriculum. Schools will have access to functioning technology to carry out these programs. CPS contracted with Aramark and SodexoMagic for custodian and nutritional services. Even though building level administration will not oversee the implementation of these contracts or supervise the employees, the work will be supported by the contracted companies.
SECTION SEVEN: STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS FOR CHANGE

The number one action to drive change is for the district to shift to implementing PLCs at the district and building levels. Rick Dufour and his team spent over 15 years shifting the Stevenson School District from one of compliance to a living breathing professional learning community. Many districts and schools have attempted to slap the PLC label on all their team structures (DuFour, 2016). Their teams function the same way, but are now labeled PLCs. DuFour’s team recently published a new Edition of *Learning by Doing: A Handbook for Professional Learning Communities at Work* (2016). The book goes in depth regarding common misconceptions of the current state of PLCs in the educational arena, and the work that needs to be done. According to DuFour, administrators ought to shift from compliance-based meetings to building PLCs (2016).

*Learning by Doing* goes into detail how schools and districts can focus on learning, building a collaborative culture with a focus on learning for all, encouraging collective inquiry into best practices and current reality, deploy action orientation, and ensure commitment to continuous improvement, results orientation, and developing common vocabulary and understanding (DuFour, 2016).

I have worked with Hector Garcia, the superintendent of Plano Community Schools, District 88, who worked as a building level administrator with Rick DuFour. I have furthermore received hands-on training with the PLC cycle and have witnessed the effectiveness of a district that functions by *Learning by Doing*. I am certain that CPS needs to authentically implement the PLC cycle at both the district and building levels. Through this cycle changes addressed in the *TO BE* (refer to Figure 2) section will fall in place. The PLC cycle begins with gathering evidence of current levels of student (or
staff) learning and expertise. Next, the team develops strategies and ideas to build on those strengths and address the weaknesses. The following step is to implement ensuing strategies and ideas. Next, the team analyzes the impact of the changes to discover what might have been effective and what was not. Finally, the team applies new knowledge in the next cycle of continuous improvement (See Appendix A). The cycle elements are rooted in research- and evidence-based best practices (Hoaglund, Birkenfeld, & Box, 2014; Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017). Six essential characteristics of a PLC are displayed in Figure 4.

![Six Essential Characteristics of a PLC](image)

**Figure 4.** [Six] 6 Essential Characteristics of a PLC. [Suggested by (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008)].

I am not attempting to simple simplify CPS’s struggles or need for change. CPS is an amazingly complex system; however, the solution is simple. I have seen
individuals, teams, schools, and the district working hard to fix CPS. Based on the staff interviews, one of the major roadblocks is that these individuals, teams, schools, and district are working separately, each in their own silo. The left and right hands are unable to see what the other is doing, nor are they working together. To achieve the much-needed change, CPS personnel must be ready for a complete change in basic assumptions, and it will take time. There are no quick fixes with this type of implementation; it takes years just to decide to execute such an initiative with validity, authority, legitimacy, and positive results. With the remarkable amount of passionately committed individuals in CPS, PLCs could be implemented with authority and expertise. The playbook is there, we just need to train everyone on the playbook and run the plays. As it stands now, CPS has a thousand different playbooks, all trying to be used throughout the district creating confusion and uncertainty.
References


DuFour, R. (2004). What is a "professional learning community"? *Educational Leadership, 61*(8), 6-11.


*Change Leadership Project Plan*


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*Change Leadership Project Plan*


Appendices

Appendix A: Definition of Terms

*Emotional Intelligence* - the capacity to be aware of, control, and express one's emotions, and to handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically.

*Continuous Improvement* - Inherent to a PLC are a persistent disquiet with the status quo and a constant search for a better way to achieve goals and accomplish the purpose of the organization. Systematic processes engage each member of the organization in an ongoing cycle of:

- Gathering evidence of current levels of student learning;
- Developing strategies and ideas to build on strengths and address weaknesses in that learning;
- Implementing those strategies and ideas;
- Analyzing the impact of the changes to discover what was effective and what was not; and
- Applying new knowledge in the next cycle of continuous improvement.

The goal is not simply to learn a new strategy, but instead to create conditions for a perpetual learning environment in which innovation and experimentation are viewed not as tasks to be accomplished or projects to be completed but as ways of conducting day-to-day business—*forever*. Furthermore, participation in this process is not reserved for those designated as leaders; rather, it is a responsibility of every member of the organization.
Appendix B: CPS Organizational Chart

Change Leadership Project Plan
## Appendix C: Themes and Illustrative Quotes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Principal</strong></td>
<td>25 years</td>
<td>Policy is forever changing. I needed a reduction in compliance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Development Team</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>I do what I can to protect my staff from the consistent changes in leadership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instructional Coach</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>My principal is overwhelmed with the amount of changes that come from transition in leadership (CEO position).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading Specialist</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>We get our directives from our network chief, who gets their directives from the Chief of Schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AP Teacher</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>I do not know how to engage with any district level staff. The relationship with the union and the district is very toxic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AP Dean</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>The lens of quality support depends on the individual. There is a great deal of turnover. I have had 8 Network Chiefs in five years. There is consistent change in Network Support Staff. I give them what they ask for.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AP</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>The ISL (Instructional Support Leader) supports over 30 schools. The ISL’s intentions are good, but they do not have a playbook to support admin teams. The work we engage in differs from school to school. I am there to support instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Network Support</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>I see the network staff in the building at times. The network staff has been in my classroom a couple of times. I never received any direct feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher</strong></td>
<td>18 Years</td>
<td>A great deal of my time is spent with the LSC. I would like to spend more time building the capacity of my administrators and teacher leaders. I spend a great deal of time behind my computer. I want to be out in the hallways and the classrooms. I am a compliance officer. I would like to spend more time coaching teachers and teams. We work directly with the administrative and instructional leadership team. We also work with individual teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher</strong></td>
<td>6 Years</td>
<td>Relocate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher</strong></td>
<td>3 Years</td>
<td>Relocate to east coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher</strong></td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Relocate near family on West coast</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**District Support**

**Network Support**

**Building Level**

**Reason for Leaving CPS**

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**Change Leadership Project Plan**
Appendix D: Interview Protocol

INSTRUCTIONS:
Good morning (afternoon). My name is Jeffrey Alstadt. Thank you for coming. I will ask you about your experiences as a (insert role) at CPS. The purpose is to get your perceptions of your experiences inside and outside of your role. There are no right or wrong or desirable or undesirable answers. I would like you to feel comfortable with saying what you really think and how you really feel.

TAPE RECORDER INSTRUCTIONS:
If it is okay with you, I will be tape-recording our conversation. The purpose of this is so that I can get all the details but at the same time be able to carry on an attentive conversation with you. I assure you that all your comments will remain confidential. I will be compiling a report which will contain all students’ comments without any reference to individuals.

INFORMED CONSENT FOR ADULT INTERVIEW:
Before we get started, please take a few minutes to read this preamble (read and sign this consent form). (Hand Informed Consent for Adult Interview.) (returns consent form, turn tape recorder on.)

QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEW:
Tell me a little about yourself.
Tell me a little about your experience as an educator.
Tell me a little about your teaching experiences?
Tell me about your experience in the role of [insert appropriate former role]?
How long were you at that school?
How did you see the school change?
How long did it take to see changes?
What was your part in that change?
What are some of the strategies you and teachers used to move your school?
What kind of supports did you receive from the district/network?
Which supports from the network were the most beneficial?
What were some roadblocks to the turnaround?
How did you maneuver those roadblocks?
During your time at the school, a lot of partners and resources are often mandated at a school.
How do you take advantage of opportunities without being overwhelmed by them?
How do you sustain progress after the intense supports end and you lose some of the resources that come along with it?
What are some of the other big challenges you faced in your school?
What is the single biggest thing you attribute to your school’s success?
Were there additional supports that would have been helpful to have during the turnaround?
Is there anything else about your school’s turnaround that you would like me to know?

DEBRIEFING:
Thank you very much for coming this morning (afternoon). Your time is very much appreciated and your comments have been very helpful. The purpose of this interview is to better understand experiences inside and outside of the classroom. We are interested in your opinions and your reactions. In no way is this interview designed to individually evaluate a person’s abilities. The task is not diagnostic, nor can it provide a measure of the “quality” of your performance. The results of this research will provide useful information to educators, in helping them to structure programs and policy that districts consider to be most effective and ideal in helping stakeholders. You will be kept anonymous during all phases of this study.

Is there any other information regarding your experience that you think would be useful for me to know?

Thank you again for your time. If you have questions later or you would like to have the results of this research, you may contact me at jalstadt@my.nl.edu or at 262.672.0219.