**Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy (CTP)**
**University of Washington**

# Learning at Every Level: A Partnership between the Center for Educational Leadership and Marysville School District

**Interim Research Report and Case Summary**
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**Learning at Every Level: A Partnership between the Center for Educational Leadership and Marysville School District**

The Center for Educational Leadership (CEL) at the University of Washington and Marysville School District began a partnership in the spring of 2005. But the seeds for their collaborative work were sown a few years earlier, before Larry Nyland, the superintendent, took over the helm of the district. Dr. Nyland came to lead the district in 2004 following a 49-day strike in 2003—the longest teacher strike in the history of the state of Washington. From that inauspicious starting point, in three years he has led the district in an intense literacy initiative to improve teaching and learning for all children, to being named Washington State's superintendent of the year in 2007. The progress in changing the culture of the district is seen as a product of his leadership. As one CEL consultant observed:

> *A district where the superintendent is leading the work puts a different spin on it because there is such a different level of interest and accountability and cohesiveness and expectation.*

While this report is a description of the instructional reform efforts led by the district, it is also a story of how the external support from CEL played a central role in bringing content expertise and leadership coaching and how this partnership has helped to shape the evolution of the reform.

The Marysville literacy initiative is characterized here as a deliberate and comprehensive reform guided by strong district leaders who share a vision that is being implemented strategically, systemically, and flexibly. Although each year begins with a well thought out plan, there has also been substantial learning along the way that contributed to its development in both accidental and intentional ways. The district leaders' ongoing assessment of the reform work, their awareness of implementation at the school sites, and their constant communication with all stakeholders allowed them to adapt and adjust to teachers' and administrators' needs as the work progressed. The work proceeded simultaneously at all levels of the district through intersecting nested learning communities[1] that worked both top-down and bottom-up.

## Marysville School District

Marysville is a small but rapidly growing bedroom community about 35 miles north of Seattle. The district serves a population of approximately 52,000 which is increasing as city dwellers move farther out in search of affordable housing. Its location just off the major interstate with easy access to rail and seaports has made it attractive to many new businesses. Military families stationed nearby and a large Boeing plant next door, along with the expanding commercial interests of the Tulalip Tribes which sit within the district boundaries, have contributed to tremendous growth in employment opportunities and in the district's enrollment. The district's demographics are reflective of

[1] This concept is elaborated on p. 9. See also Stein, M. K., & Nelson, B.S. (2003). Leadership Content Knowledge, *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 25, 4,* pp. 423-448.

the state average with one notable exception, the Native American population. It is a primarily white middle and working class community, but houses significant pockets of poverty and increasing ethnic diversity: 34 percent qualify for free and reduced priced lunch and 14 percent receive special education services (slightly higher than the state average). The district serves a population that is 74 percent white, 8-9 percent Native American, 8 percent Hispanic/Latino, 7 percent Asian, and 2 percent Black. Current enrollment hovers around 11,800 students in 10 elementary schools, 4 'middle level'[2] schools, 1 comprehensive high school and 3 smaller non-traditional high school arrangements.[3] But all of that is about to change, as the district is in the midst of restructuring all of its secondary schools, with one new secondary campus opening in the fall, another high school on the drawing boards and work underway on a elementary school that will open in fall 2008.

## The CEL Research Project

In the fall of 2004, the University of Washington research team began a qualitative research study examining how an external support provider—The Center for Educational Leadership (CEL)—was engaging school districts in collaborative teaching and learning partnerships to advance instructional leadership for the purpose of improving teaching and learning for all students. The study began with an initial pilot investigation of one school district (Highline School District in Washington State). In the spring of 2005, we extended the research to include Norwalk-La Mirada School District in Norwalk, California, and in the fall of 2005, we added a third district (Marysville School District in Washington State). The data summarized in this report were collected over the first two years of the partnership with Marysville School District from September 2005 to June 2007.

The first year of data collection in Marysville focused largely on the work of district leaders in shaping the reform and the structures they designed to support the initiative, including professional development (PD) forums and coaching practices. Some initial efforts were made in year one of the study to get to know a few schools and to observe a few of their school-based professional development sessions to identify potential research sites. In the second year of the study our focus turned to understanding how the initiative was being implemented at school sites at three schools (one elementary and two middle level[4]), while still monitoring the overall scope of the reform in the district.

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[2] Throughout this report, 'middle level' is used to refer to three schools that have different configurations: a junior high contains grades 8 and 9, one middle school with students in grades 6, 7, and 8, and another with just grades 6 and 7. There is also an alternative 10th Street campus that serves 6th , 7th , and 8th grade students with an interest in music. All of these schools will be reconfigured into a consistent middle school configuration in fall 2007.

[3] Heritage is a small 6-12 school on the reservation serving largely Native students. Arts & Technical HS and MAHS (Marysville Alternative High School) are small secondary campuses.

[4] Due to the reorganization that was occurring in high schools, the research team chose not select a high school for the study.

***Data Collection Procedures***

Over the course of two years (the 2005-06 and 2006-07 school years) we conducted a total of 50 semi-structured individual interviews, including:

- 12 interviews with central office leaders (3 with the superintendent, 2 with each of the members of the superintendent's cabinet, 1 with the human resources director, and 2 with the district literacy coach)
- 9 interviews with building principals
- 10 interviews with literacy coaches
- 13 interviews with teachers
- 6 interviews with CEL consultants, including the project director

Most interviews were about an hour in length and focused on the informants' involvement in the literacy initiative, what they were learning, and the challenges they faced in this work.

In addition, we conducted multiple and repeated observations of events related to the Marysville-CEL partnership, including: district planning meetings, district instructional practice sessions, principal instructional leadership meetings, walk-throughs of schools with district staff and CEL consultants, literacy coach training, principal triads, studio sessions, summer school, and building-based professional development at three schools. Multiple artifacts, such as instructional memos, calendars, professional development plans, and instructional materials were collected throughout the data collection period.

***Data Analysis***

Between January and July 2007, the research team read the entire data set and began to identify key categories and themes within the data (each member of the team read and open-coded a portion of the data). We then identified four main categories and subthemes and subsequently coded all interviews and field notes using the HyperResearch qualitative data analysis program.

Following these open and focused coding procedures, the research team developed a summary of the data, which is presented in this report. These materials will be further analyzed by triangulating data across the various data sources and developing hypotheses on which to organize cross-case analyses that summarize findings across the three school districts. To minimize bias and maximize data quality, we plan to check our assertions with local scholars and informants from CEL and the school district before proceeding to final writing stages.

## Marysville Launches a Literacy Initiative on its Own

When Larry Nyland became superintendent of Marysville School District, he already knew the importance of literacy and instructional improvement district-wide. He had worked with CEL prior to coming to Marysville when he was the academic officer and human resource director in Highline School District where he played a key role in launching that district's literacy reform initiative with CEL in 2003. That experience contributed significantly to shaping his vision of quality instruction and his belief that

literacy was the critical place to start. In fact, as he put his leadership team together in the summer of 2004, he persuaded Gail Miller, who had an extensive literacy and professional development background, to join him in spearheading the literacy initiative in Marysville as his assistant superintendent. Dr. Cindy Clausen was brought in as Director of Student Achievement, adding broad leadership experience from the school, district, and state levels. So the new team quickly gelled to share a vision of what quality instruction looks like and what they wanted to accomplish for the students in Marysville. One of the district leaders characterized the arrangement by saying, *"we work as a team in terms of the cabinet. There's such a commitment and expectation that we're focused on instruction as district leaders*."

On top of trying to reassure the district's teachers that it was 'a new day in Marysville' and negotiating five new contracts their first year, the original team of three began right away with creating a focus on literacy. The leadership team planned monthly professional development seminars together with the superintendent taking the lead in teaching them throughout the 2004-05 school year. Right from the beginning, he built into the content training a focus on leadership. Although they knew they would need to bring in outside expertise to help, the plan from the start was to 'grow their own' to build the capacity within the district to lead instructional improvement. Thus, working with principals was a primary focus.

That message was clearly communicated when the training began with the superintendent teaching the principals about independent reading—the aspect of reading that the team felt they knew best. They taught the structures of independent reading in a workshop model, emphasizing the mini-lesson, building classroom libraries and trying to generate enthusiasm about books to get children reading. The principals were reporting back to their staff, excited about the new direction, and asked if they could bring some of their teachers. The 'designated' elementary literacy coaches[5] were soon brought into the training and a literacy consultant was hired to provide support to the elementary coaches.

Initially, the leadership team thought they had no choice but to lead the work themselves, as they didn't think they had the resources to hire help. Looking back, the superintendent realized that, by taking a risk and leading the training himself, he had been building more than just content knowledge:

> *So we were modeling it, trying it on, and it created its own credibility in the system in terms of showing that the superintendent seems to know a little bit about reading here. And it sounds pretty good.*

One member of the leadership team described the impact of having the superintendent lead the professional development this way:

> *It was about being a lead learner. But the message was always just trying it on, testing it out, what did we learn. It really was sort of the action research model, and he led that, and he modeled it constantly. And his tireless approach and his enthusiasm for the work inspired other people to be on board.* [Administrator A]

[5] How literacy coaches were identified is explained in the next section on Literacy Coaches.

By design, the principals were key to getting the literacy initiative off to a strong start. The district team strategically identified a few veteran principals to take to New York to see what balanced literacy looked like when it was mature and embedded throughout a school. One director took all the elementary principals to visit two schools in Highline School District, which was in its third year of developing their literacy initiative in partnership with CEL. These visits helped school leaders visualize where they were going:

> *After I went to New York City I was able to understand the nuance of it. I was able to see the depth and breadth. It was more than this simple little routine thing. It just helped me to get it.* [Principal E]

The opportunity to see where they were headed, coupled with the new leadership style, inspired most of the principals to invest in the work.

**Literacy Coaches**

From the beginning, the district leaders knew they wanted literacy coaches to provide support at the building level. The previous administration had already created a position of 'literacy coach' at the elementary level, which had become part of the contractual agreement with the Marysville Education Association (MEA). Each of the buildings had a reading specialist, who provided direct intervention with struggling readers. Without any additional training or explicit understanding of what their new role would be, these reading specialists became the elementary literacy coaches.

When the new administration took over, this designated group of literacy coaches was quickly brought into the district initiative. They began attending the monthly literacy seminars with their principals. At first, the expectation for the coaches was to find classrooms where they could practice what they were learning. And then the district, with assistance from a reading consultant, started pulling the coaches together as a group to clarify their role, explain the expectations for them as coaches, and to support their work.

In the spring of 2005, Gail Miller brought in the International Reading Association (IRA) guidelines for coaching. She made her direction clear:

> *We talked about the different developmental levels of becoming a coach and what that looks like. But I said to them, it's fair to you to tell you that in three years I expect our coaches will be doing all the things in level three. So let's look at level three.*

Level three in the IRA guidelines describe an intense formal coaching role that included:

- Modeling and discussing lessons
- Co-teaching lessons
- Visiting classrooms and providing feedback to teachers
- Analyzing videotape lessons of teachers
- Doing lesson study with teachers

Gail knew that this might not be a role that some of these coaches wanted to fulfill. The coaches had not applied for these positions. So she assured them that if this was not a role they wanted to take on, the district would find other positions for them where they could apply their knowledge and skills. But she was clear that the level three coaching guidelines would be the expectation if they wanted to remain literacy coaches. If they chose to continue, the district promised to train them and support them. One of the most important training venues would be summer school and one of the new expectations was that the literacy coaches would teach summer school. In 2005, seven of the coaches taught; in 2006, anyone who had not taught the first year was expected to teach if they wanted to continue to coach.

After the year of the strike, one administrator speculated that the principals and teachers were just grateful for Larry's leadership. The transparency with which they began learning together made it clear to building leaders that the new administration was "*extremely collaborative,"* sincere in their efforts to *"build a community"* and that the "*intention was totally focused on building on the strengths of the District and the schools in Marysville*."

The leadership team continued the monthly seminars until mid-spring when, as they tell it, they "*ran out of expertise."* By then they also realized that they had some carry-over funds from a large grant and Larry turned to CEL for assistance.

**Early Work with CEL**

Larry's previous experience with the university and with attempting this complex work had shaped his thinking about what to do differently in Marysville. For example, having had experience with multiple consultants in Highline, he knew it mattered whom he brought in to do the training. At that point in the year, the consultant he wanted wasn't available, so they began with a small, short-term contract with CEL and brought in Ann Van Sickle and Wilma Kozai, both former instructional leaders in San Diego, to help complete the training for the year. CEL consultants assisted with a few of the training sessions, introducing book leveling[6] to strengthen the district's independent reading focus, and coaching the district leaders on their leadership work. They went on walk-throughs with the leadership team and helped them sharpen the purpose of their observations by asking targeted questions. As a result, their walks became an intentional opportunity to assess the effectiveness of their training. The superintendent phrased it simply:

> *First, we were just looking for evidence of what we had taught in professional development. We did the teaching. We know they sat in on the teaching. So how did we do? Now we're here to watch you do it.*

District leaders credit Ann Van Sickle with helping them understand a critical concept, the gradual release of responsibility (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) that is fundamental in balanced literacy. There is a continuum of approaches that require different levels of

[6] Book leveling refers to a system for analyzing the characteristics of text for level of reading difficulty in order to assist teachers in selecting 'just right' books for their students and to help students learn to make those decisions for themselves.

scaffolding for students [see Figure 1]. A read aloud provides the highest level of support, where the teacher is doing most of the work, teaching new skills, and modeling **to** students how to use the skill. Shared reading, as the name implies, shares the reading work **with** the students but still relies on the teacher to provide substantial guidance. Students read the text along with the teacher, who uses engagement strategies to help the students make meaning of the text. But these scaffolds are meant to be temporary. After many opportunities to see models and practice the skills, the goal is to gradually release the responsibility to the students so that they are able to do the work **by** themselves and read independently.

**Figure 1. Gradual Release for Reading Instruction[7]**

| *TO* | *WITH* | *BY* |
|---|---|---|
| *(Immersion)* **Read Aloud Think Aloud** | *(Demonstration)* **Shared Reading** | *(Practice)* **Independent Reading** |
| Lots of teacher support | Shared teacher and student work | Transferring responsibility to student |

Reinforcing this concept, Ann kept reminding the district leaders to keep in mind what they wanted learners (whether they were principals, teachers, or students) to know and be able to do. She kept asking, 'what are you empowering students to be able to do in the classroom?', and 'what's your evidence for it?' She kept raising the questions that have become a mantra for the superintendent: 'Why this? Why now? And what are you expecting people to do as a result?'

And, at the same time, she made the district leaders realize that they had "*started their literacy work at the end that gave the least support for the students*." Summer school provided them with a chance to make a course correction. The following sections describe each of the structures Marysville put in place to support professional learning during summer school and the 2005-06 school year.

**Blended Professional Development Summer School 2005**

By the time they started planning for their first summer school, the district leaders recognized they needed to create a situation that provided lots of support to the teachers who would be asked to teach in new ways. Teachers needed to see models to help them learn how to use new approaches. The leaders had seen the impact of the New York and Highline visits, when principals were able to see what students were able to do when teachers used these approaches and they wanted to create a similar experience for teachers. In order to immerse teachers in the literacy work, the superintendent decided to put two teachers in a classroom together with twenty students so they could team teach.

[7] Larry Nyland, Instructional Memo, Balanced Literacy, September 9, 2006. Read aloud, shared reading, and independent reading are the three approaches of the balanced literacy framework that have been introduced thus far in Marysville.

They were trying to build a collaborative culture in a lab school-like setting that would nurture both teacher learning and student learning. Teachers in summer school, including seven of the literacy coaches, received hands-on training two afternoons a week and the opportunity to practice their new skills in a supportive environment for four weeks. They also got to see Lyn Reggett, another CEL consultant, model skilled practice.

Re-affirming the superintendent's belief that who does the training is critical, district leaders saw Lyn Reggett as the perfect person for what their teachers needed at that time. The teachers found her to be extremely knowledgeable, but friendly and easy going. She announced to the teachers that they were going to do 'read alouds and we're going to try to create meaning for the kids.' Although she modeled sophisticated practices, masterfully weaving together a number of strategies seemingly effortlessly, she made the work manageable and fun. A district leader characterized it from the perspective of the teachers as:

> *Wow! We got this warm, fuzzy person, and she wants us to get this book out, she wants us to read it with enthusiasm and she wants us to stop every so often. How hard can this be? Sure, I'll give it a shot. Whoa! This is exciting. Look what it's doing for my kids.* [Administrator C]

But district leaders also saw the benefits of their investment when these 50 summer school teachers became the ambassadors for the literacy initiative:

> *The immersion of summer school was just huge from the standpoint of having fifty people who went back to the building just pumped, enthused, excited, energized, saying we can do this work. It built a good beachhead in each building.* [Administrator C]

During summer school there was also an event that was a significant turning point for the district in terms of building trust and changing the culture.

Gail Miller, the assistant superintendent, who provided support for the district literacy coaches, was caught off guard when a teacher asked during an afternoon PD session, 'when are we going to get the forms for our report cards for summer school?' She realized she hadn't thought about it and didn't have a plan. She explained in the following vignette how she believes this incident moved the district forward:

> *So that night I made up a report card. I took it to them the next day and I presented it as a draft and said I really would like their input. So the next day they came back with input. One group had gone so far as coming back with a rubric that was a more holistic view of kids, it had developmental stages. And they presented this. And so there began—and by this time they knew each other fairly well—there began to be kind of a push-back from other people. So I facilitated the conversation. 'OK, that's a good idea. Let's hear why that might not work.' And I kept the focus on the work, not on the people. And they produced a good report card.*

*I said, 'you know, I have to tell you that I am so proud to be an administrator in a district where conversations like this could occur. Look what you guys just did. You took an issue. You looked at both sides of it. You were open and honest but respectful with each other.' I said, 'I just couldn't be more proud. I would love working in a place like this.' The people applauded…*

*A couple of highly respected teachers stood up and said, 'I have been in this district for sixteen years and a conversation like this with an administrator has never occurred before.'*

Teachers were truly appreciative of the rich learning experience they had had. The district had intentionally paired strong teachers with their literacy coaches and these teacher teams were released and given opportunities to observe Lyn Reggett demonstrate in the hopes that they would become part of the leadership teams at their school sites. And most of the teachers realized what was expected of them and took that responsibility seriously. The district extended their investment by inviting them back to be part of the instructional practice professional development forums the following year to continue to nurture them as teacher leaders.

This important foundation was built prior to the district and CEL's launching a full-fledged partnership, which began in earnest at the beginning of the 2005-06 school year. The district had already received some critical contributions of expertise when they needed it—arranging the site visit to New York, Ann Van Sickle and Wilma Kozai's coaching, and Lyn Reggett's expert teaching during summer school. The leadership team's cumulative experience, the year of leading the work on their own, and the summer school experiment taught them the value of creating a dissemination model that would establish nested learning communities at multiple levels of the district. So the first year of the partnership with CEL was launched with an intentional design for professional development at every level of the district. They tried to build capacity by using the same principles they were learning to use to support student learning, encouraging the gradual release of responsibility, incorporating elements of "To, With, and By" into all adult professional learning.

**CEL-Marysville Partnership Year 1 (2005-06)**

Figure 2 illustrates how the district's work is interconnected. Adapted from Stein & Nelson (2003), it describes nested learning communities where are all educators are both leaders and learners. *Leadership Content Knowledge* is viewed as the knowledge of academic content and the knowledge leaders need to function as instructional leaders. Stein and Nelson contend that leaders must know at least one subject well, including how it is learned and how it is taught in order to lead instructional improvement:

*Professional development for teachers is not sufficient to change instructional practice, especially across an entire system. Teachers must believe that serious engagement in their own learning is part and parcel of what it means to be a professional and they must expect to be held*

> *accountable for continuously improving their instructional practice. Similarly, principals must not only be capable of providing professional development for their teachers, but also have the knowledge, skills, and strength of character to hold teachers accountable for integrating what they have learned in professional development into their ongoing practice. District leaders, in turn, must be able to support principals' learning and be knowledgeable enough to be able to hold principals accountable in a fair way.* (p. 425)

At the core of Figure 2 is the triangle that shapes instruction,[8] tying together the needs of the students, the purpose of the lesson, and the text or other instructional materials students are trying to master in a given content area. In Marysville, that content was reading. This triangle presumes that the teachers have sufficient content knowledge to make informed instructional decisions. One layer out are the teachers who are leaders in their role of teaching students and holding them accountable for continuously improving what they know and are able to do. At the same time teachers are learning from their students, their colleagues, their literacy coaches, their principals, and ongoing professional development. Similarly, literacy coaches are leaders in supporting teacher learning (and often principal learning) while they continue to learn to hone their skills from the teachers they coach, colleagues, principals, district administrators, and PD. With each layer the leaders' job becomes more complex as they must master the learning at each of the inner layers in order to lead instructional improvement. Principals must know the subject matter, how to teach that content, and how students and teachers learn. Principals then lead their staff—literacy coaches and teachers—while deepening their own knowledge of instructional practice by learning from teachers and coaches, their colleagues, district leaders, and CEL consultants.

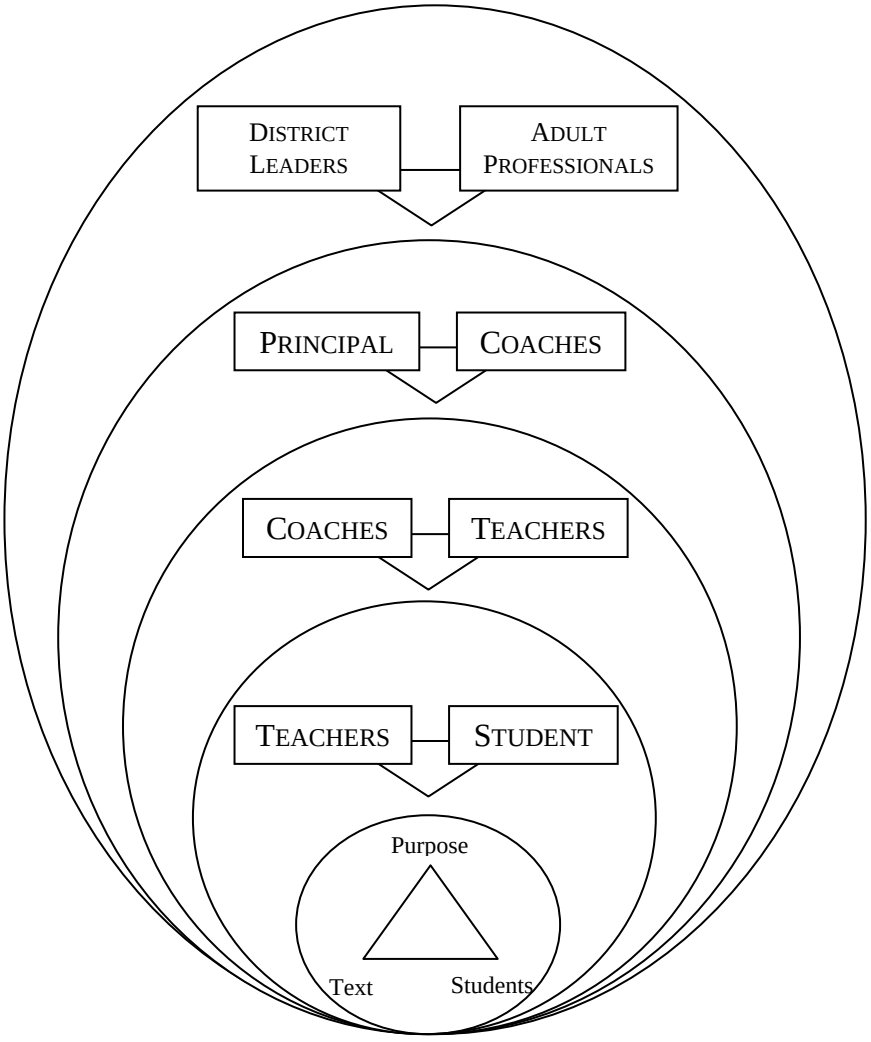
The district leaders, at the outer-most ring, are also both leaders and learners. They are learning to master all of the knowledge in the inner three ovals, plus how to lead an organization to help all teachers improve. In Marysville, they lead (teach) parts of the instructional practice seminars in collaboration with CEL consultants and the instructional leadership sessions for principals. They also learn from their CEL 'coaches' and from the work the schools are doing. The district leaders instituted regular classroom walk-throughs and spent time in schools to learn both what practices were being implemented in school-based PD and in classrooms and what the school teams need next to further improve their practice.

The full partnership with CEL began with the 2005-06 academic year with a set of structures intended to support the learning of the district leaders, building principals, literacy coaches and literacy team leaders, as well as all staff, in multiple forums. The primary vehicles for this learning in Marysville during the first year were (1) monthly

[8] The 'triangle' was introduced by Katherine Casey during the instructional practice seminars and is explained further in the next section on page 16. This simple diagram was an early draft of a diagram Katherine later expanded upon in her book, *Literacy Coaching: The Essentials*, into a decision-making cycle for effective instruction. Casey, K. (2006). *Literacy coaching: The essentials* Portsmouth, NH: Heinnemann. (p. 166)

day-long professional development seminars referred to as "instructional practice" sessions; (2) bi-monthly sessions for literacy coaches, one full day and one half day; (3) blended professional development-summer school; (4) monthly meetings referred to as *"triads,"* held at building sites with principals; (5) walk-throughs; (6) 'waiver days' (five 'no student' days plus 4 days in August before the start of school) for building-based professional development, and; (7) instructional leadership sessions once each month with principals.

**Figure 2. Nested Learning Communities adapted from Stein & Nelson (2003)**

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Katherine Casey, a CEL consultant, led the instructional practice sessions and the work with the literacy coaches. Katherine tailored her monthly seminars to the needs of the school district (administrators, literacy coaches, and school leadership teams) through her collaboration with district leaders and Wilma Kozai, the CEL Project Director, who also led secondary principal cadres and worked on-site as a leadership coach. Given the

district leadership team's grasp of the schools' needs, they co-planned with Wilma and Katherine the instructional practice days each month to strategically support the next steps of the initiative's progression. One additional CEL consultant, Kimiko Fukuda, was contracted to work with the elementary principal triads (3-4 principals in each triad). In addition, the district leaders continued a practice instituted in their first year, (now with some additional guidance from the CEL project director) seven monthly three-hour instructional leadership sessions to focus specifically on leadership challenges and expectations. The following table summarizes these learning environments, the key participants, and activities:

**Table 1**
**Supporting Learning for district and building leaders**

| Learning Environment | Participants | Content | Frequency | Typical Activities |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Instructional Practice Seminars** | **District leaders (Superintendent, Assistant superintendents, Directors); All principals; District and building literacy coaches; Teacher Leaders (2-4 per building); CEL consultant; CEL project director** | **Balanced Literacy components (read aloud, shared reading, independent reading); Foundations of literacy; Powerful instruction; Instructional leadership** | **One day per month** | **Large group presentation by CEL consultant; Small group discussions; Demonstrations with Marysville students; Analysis of videotaped lessons; Planning for PD at schools** |
| **Coach Training** | **District literacy coach; Building literacy coaches; Some district leaders; CEL consultant; CEL project director** | **Balanced Literacy; Literacy Foundations (book leveling, conferring, assessment); Instructional Coaching; Professional literature** | **One day per month** | **Whole group work with CEL consultant: Demonstration lessons with students or side-by-side with coaches; Peer observations of coaching** |
| **----------** | **----------** | | **----------** | **----------** |
| **District Coach Meetings/training** | **Literacy coaches; District** | | **One half-day per month** | **Whole group and small group work;** |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Coaches; Asst. Superintendent** | | **(in between CEL coach training)** | **Sharing ideas & concerns** |
| **Blended Professional Development/ Summer School** | **Literacy Coaches; CEL consultants and project director; District leaders; and Teachers** | **Balanced Literacy; Powerful Instruction** | **6 weeks (teaching); PD 2 days/week** | **Opportunity to practice approaches learned in PD with support on a daily basis; Demonstrations by CEL consultants** |
| **Principal Triads** | **CEL consultant; District leaders; 3 or 4 principals; Occasionally a literacy coach** | **Balanced Literacy; Powerful instruction; Leadership of the literacy initiative in the schools** | **3 days per year** | **Walk-throughs; Classroom observations w/ debrief; Discussions with CEL consultant; Discussions w/ colleagues** |
| **Classroom Walk-throughs** | **District leaders; Principals; CEL consultants (occasionally); Literacy Coaches** | **Balanced Literacy; Powerful instruction** | **2 – 3 days per week** | **Look for evidence of literacy practices, powerful instruction, impact of coaching** |
| **School-based PD Waiver Days** | **Principal and school leadership team; Literacy coach; Whole school staff; District Leaders (periodically); CEL project director (occasionally)** | **Balanced Literacy; Powerful instruction (determined by building)** | **5 half-days/year; 4 days before school starts** | **Varies by school, often components from Instructional Practice sessions—whole group, small group, watch videos, and debrief.** |
| **District Principal Instructional Leadership** | **Superintendent; Asst. Superintendent; Directors; Principals** | **Instructional leadership** | **One half day per month** | **Instructional memos; Leadership voice; Professional development** |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | **planning; Budget, staffing to support literacy** |

The 2005-06 school year brought additional expertise to Marysville's leadership team when Dr. Andy Rogers joined the district as the director of Learning Support Services, of which special education was a primary responsibility. He brought to the team extensive experience at the middle school level and previous work with CEL's program focus on instruction and equity.

In Marysville, the focus was always on quality instruction in the classroom, so the professional learning (all aspects of it) blended deepening content knowledge in reading and how to teach it. Building leaders (administrators and teachers) had the additional responsibility of learning how to lead the work.

Thus, the district's approach was both fast-paced and broad in scope including principals, literacy coaches, and teachers almost from the beginning. Support structures and new practices were introduced at multiple levels of the district simultaneously to bring everyone along, and district leaders knew that, as it unfolded, the expectations would have to rise. The instructional practice seminars provided the direction.

**Instructional practice sessions**

The intensity of the professional learning increased rapidly when Katherine Casey began leading the instructional practice sessions in September 2005. The board room was full with almost 100 educators seated in school teams squeezed around tables. The district paid for two substitutes per building to allow principals to bring their literacy coaches (most of whom did not need a sub) and two teachers. Although Katherine led the training, the superintendent opened the session by explaining, "Why this? Why now? And what do we want participants to know and be able to do with this training?" He recapped what they had done the previous year and in summer school and explained that they knew they needed to go back and fill in some holes so that they would know *how* to get students to independent reading—their focus in Year 1. He reassured participants of the support they would have for their learning, following the gradual release model of "to, with, and by." And he set the expectation that this group of building leaders would play a central role in helping their colleagues back at their school sites. His approach was to balance support and expectation by using '*gentle pressure, relentless support*.' Initially, he charged the teams to "*Pick three things to try on"* during the year (which was later reduced to one) to be their building focus for the year. They would have their first opportunity to begin that work in ten days at their first school-based PD.

In the very first session, Katherine moved from 'what does learning to read involve?' to modeling how good readers use cueing systems to make sense of text. She asked participants to read a science fiction piece, *All summer in a day*, by Ray

Bradbury, to encourage readers to think about what they do as readers to make meaning. From there she moved to demonstrating with students and asked the audience to note what she was doing to engage the students in making meaning. She modeled how she used the standards (Grade Level Expectations, or GLEs) to determine the purpose for her read aloud lesson. She arranged the room to gain proximity to students and established expectations for how students would discuss the reading, and she scaffolded the instruction using a chart to guide their thinking. Although she had a plan for the lesson, she adapted her lesson to the students' needs by listening to their ideas. After debriefing the teacher moves that the audience had noticed, she introduced Brian Cambourne's Conditions for Learning, based on years of research where effective literacy instruction occurred. In that one packed six-hour training, Katherine gave people a glimpse of the depth and complexity of balanced literacy and at the same time inspired people to want to learn more.

Seven months later, one of the literacy coaches recounted the impact that first day had on her:

> *There were many things I could talk about with Katherine but I remember what nabbed me with her was right at the beginning of this year she used 'All Summer in a Day' and then I brought it back and the staff was just intrigued. When I read it they were just like clinging on the edge of their seats and I think it was really good for them just to see what a read aloud could do for an audience and how powerful that thinking was. I think it just kind of grabbed them. And, so Katherine did that for me because she grabbed me in that read aloud piece and then let me bring it back to the staff.* [Literacy Coach A]

Following that first session the school leadership teams had a wealth of material to plan their first waiver day. The schools all started in different places and some simply said, 'this is what Katherine says to do,' and shared handouts. Many tried to mimic what Katherine did and tried to model what they had observed. What was significant was that they all[9] made a start after only a six-hour introduction.

Throughout the first year of instructional practice seminars, Katherine proceeded to pull apart the big ideas and demonstrate how to make read alouds and shared reading engage students in making meaning. The topics ranged from chunking texts and questioning strategies for fiction and non-fiction, to co-constructing charts, lesson planning using standards to guide what students needed to know and be able to do, text levels and structures, conferring, text selection, and test taking as a genre. Often time was built into the sessions for the leadership teams to plan what they would take back to their colleagues during their next school-based PD. They were encouraged to use Katherine's PD plans as a template and reminded to include something they wanted to teach **to** the staff, provide an opportunity to practice **with** the ideas, and leave them with an assignment to try on **by** themselves or as a grade-level or department team.

[9] This observation was based on district leaders' reports after visiting school sites during the first waiver day.

***Themes from Instructional Practice Seminars***

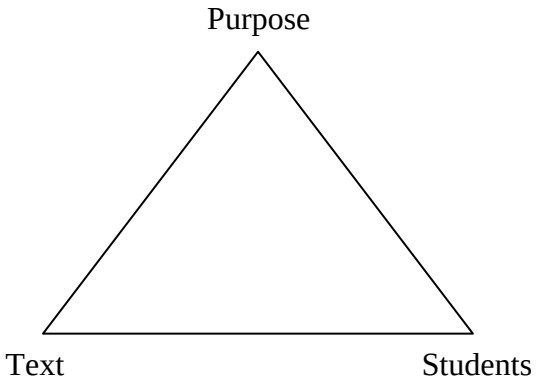
In reflecting on what they learned from the instructional practice seminars, principals', coaches', and teachers' reflections coalesced around 3 themes: (1) Katherine's triangle as a framework for planning powerful lessons, (2) the district's leadership in providing quality professional development, and (3) the impact this model of professional learning had on changing the culture of the district.

Several principals pointed to all three factors as having contributed to changing the district's culture, but also suggested that the superintendent was the one who engineered bringing together all the parts to support a "whole culture" for change.

*Instructional Decision Making Triangle*

One idea that resonated and stayed with the principals, teachers, and coaches we interviewed was what they all referred to as "*Katherine's triangle*" (see Figure 3). They felt that the power of the instructional practice seminars was seeing Katherine model how the legs of the triangle worked together: the idea that powerful instruction incorporated all three components—purpose (the content they wanted students to know and be able to use), knowledge of students (what students are able to do now and an understanding of how they learn), and selecting the appropriate text. This framework stayed with them because it was reinforced each time they watched her demonstrate read alouds and engage students in discussions by asking purposeful questions. They also saw the impact it had on students.

**Figure 3. Instructional Triangle**




This model helped principals assess where their staff needed to focus:

> *We had the triangle: getting to know our kids, getting to know the grade level expectations and the standards, and then getting to know our text. Learning about text — that we began to touch on this year. That portion we need to go deeper on and the staff realizes it. They don't know a lot about text features unless they have a literacy background, so they need to really learn about text features and how important that is in helping the kids make meaning. Then getting to know our kids, really understanding*

> *what is driving our kids. Where are they? What are their strength areas? But most particularly, where are their areas of need? Right now we're kind of flying by the seat of our pants about knowing our kids.* [Principal A]

Literacy coaches also found the triangle helped them structure their work with teachers:

> *It feels like I yo-yo just back and forth but when we know more we need to go back and refine and push forward again. The idea, in my head anyway is that we've got this understanding of GLE's now, not perfect or at all fully developed but better than it was before, so now our next steps are going to be focusing in on helping our teachers understand their students and then the other piece of what Katherine's been talking to us about understanding text and analyzing books.* [Coach B]

Another principal reflected on the impact the framework has had on teaching:

> *Some of the different read alouds Katherine Casey has done showed how you really select what text you're going to use, based on the purpose you want, and then how do you get to know your students better so that you know the purposes. Trying that whole loop of her triangle, I think we're thinking about that all the time now. So, I think instruction is more focused than it has been in the past.* [Principal B]

*Leadership*

A recurring theme we heard in our interviews and in remarks during district PD was how willing people were to 'try on' new practices because the district leaders set the example. Even though they had hired an expert to conduct the training, district leaders always played a significant role in each session by introducing that day's work, sharing their own efforts to make sense of what they were learning, and setting expectations for school teams. They took risks and demonstrated that they were all learning. A common refrain we heard was, *"the way Larry models—it isn't perfect, but he's willing to try, so we can too. It's not intimidating."*

One principal was not so sure about the intimidation part, but she agreed with the sentiment:

> *They're learners. I mean, they really exemplify what learners are so they don't just require us to do it. But whatever they ask of us, they ask of themselves first. We watch Larry try it, we watch Gail try it, we watch Cindy try it. And we're all observing them and they ask for feedback so we need to do the same thing but it's scary. (Laughs) It's really scary, especially those of us who have been around a long time. They've been the first ones to say, "We don't know. We're learning just like you are."* [Principal B]

The strong leadership was also evident to CEL consultants who observed that the leaders reflected what the district believed:

*Larry is leading this work in Marysville, he is the most active person at trying to figure out what he believes about instructional practice. He wrestles with it. There is evidence in his frequent instructional memos to the staff. "I'm going to send out my best thinking, but it's not really finalized, but here you go. I'm trying to make sense of what Katherine's doing."*

There is also evidence that the quality of the instructional practice sessions and the leadership style is having a palpable impact on changing the culture of the district.

*Changing the culture*

CEL Consultants find Marysville an exciting place to work because administrators and teachers are 'eager learners.' Principals feel more supported, no longer feeling like they are working in isolation, which makes them want to press their own learning. One principal admitted that during the year before the instructional practice sessions started she had read three professional books. The next year she read 26! This change was remarkable to veterans in the district for whom the strike was still a vivid memory:

*The fact that you have an organization working on one thing in one direction is very good for organizational morale, job satisfaction, and—particularly with this school district—to have everybody focused on teaching and learning rather than focused on other problems has been a huge success of this initiative—along with what it does for student learning.* [Principal A]

As much as the superintendent was clear about the direction he was headed, the reform was experienced more as invitation than a mandate. One of the administrators tried to explain the difference:

*The focus is not on the test scores. The achievement is a by-product of the quality learning experiences. And I am a firm believer in that; to create that you have to invest a lot in teachers' having tools and skills and the capability to know their students, to deliver and create learning experiences that are rich and meaningful, and that a more collaborative type environment is going to be lot more successful. It's what it means for a leader to be a learner. When I look at working with Gail and Larry and Cindy, they really are right out there publicly as learners. And they commit time and energy—they walk the talk.* [Administrator B]

To many teachers it was a completely new experience to be part of a collaborative team with administrators:

*One of the great things about my professional development is that my principal is there. We have other teachers there, together, learning. This has been a great experience for me. In other places where I've taught, you send one person. They go get it. Then, it's up to them to come back and teach and share with the staff and the principal. And, there's no one there to confer with or to help you work with the process or get your thinking out to share ideas. […] you don't feel like you're out there alone when you*

*have other teachers right there with you. Your leader is there, trying on this work. Your leader is there, trying to get an understanding. It makes a world of difference because you can see that vision is actually working, everybody's working toward that together.* [Teacher A]

We also heard numerous stories about the number of teachers who were adopting new practices—interactive read alouds and shared reading, studying the GLEs and leveling school libraries. Principals were most impressed with 'turn around' teachers—veterans who completely changed their attitudes and their practices that started a ripple effect in the school:

*She was my 'dig-in-her-heels' and she was not going to go there, she thought, and she's a gifted teacher, a gifted, gifted teacher, but she didn't see any sense in doing this stuff that we were doing. But we asked her if she would go to the training with us. (Cluck, cluck, cluck). She gave us such a bad time. She went to that first one and it completely made a difference in her and she couldn't wait to go to the next one. So, because of her having a leadership role now, she became a model. She opened up her doors and said, "Come in and watch me teach." Never would have done that before. "Come on in and watch me teach. Pick it apart. Do what you need to do to it."* [Principal B]

The careful planning among the CEL project director, Katherine Casey, and the district leaders enabled them to tailor the training to what the schools needed, to know how fast to move and when to revisit ideas that were still confusing. The more in-depth the training became and the more participants understood about the foundational pieces and developed awareness of the whole picture, the more school teams felt they had permission to '*just take on this one piece'* and '*get good at that piece.'* The exceptional quality of the training energized all we interviewed. Principals considering retirement couldn't imagine leaving when they were learning more than at any time in their careers. As the following quote indicates, teachers felt honored to be a part of the leadership team and obliged to try on the work:

*We were having an outside expert come in and I think anytime the district spends the money to bring an expert in, especially one who has been revisiting and revisiting and forming a relationship with us, instead of the one-day-wonder kind of information. It seems to me that she was really personalizing her content to what our needs were as a district and where we are, where we've come from, where we need to go.* [Teacher B]

**Walk-throughs**

With each building developing its own focus, the strategy district leaders adopted to stay informed about progress in each building was to institute regular walk-throughs. The superintendent's leadership team divided up into teams and spent two to three mornings a week out in schools. The purpose of the walk-throughs was explained as an important opportunity for the district's own learning. The district leaders used the walks to assess how effective they had been in teaching

new skills. What they learned on their visits to schools was used to inform their planning for the next instructional practice session. They repeatedly emphasized that these visits were not evaluative. This message, along with the frequency of the walk-throughs, helped alleviate some of the anxiety of the visits. The superintendent alone participated in over 500 walk-throughs of the 20 schools during the 2005-06 school year.

That's not to say that visits by the superintendent no longer make principals nervous. The expectations set to try on the work carried more weight because administrators followed through with their requests by visiting the schools to check on progress:

> *Just the fact that they are showing up in my office is huge accountability. And walking through. I always did walk-throughs before this, a little different than now, but very much out in the classrooms, to get to know the students and get to know the teachers. So, this wasn't a huge change, but the accountability changed. We were expected to send our agenda, our instructional memo, our exit slips, and any other write ups that we did. We sent all of that stuff every time* [to our supervisor]. *So, that's sort of accountability for what went on. Plus, they came through when it was happening.* [Principal C]

One of Gail Miller's favorite sayings from Madeline Hunter is, "You can lead a horse to water; you can't make them drink, but you can salt their oats." The walk-throughs also served as a bit of salt to motivate schools to make continuous improvement as all of the schools wanted to impress the district leaders with their progress. One of the literacy coaches shared her observation of how the reaction to having district leaders in the building has changed and had a positive effect:

> *I think the district has helped us grow trust in our building. I think in the beginning when the district came for walk-throughs, it was like—what did they say, and then, that kind of changed to, I have even heard teachers say, okay, what is my next step, what can I do different. So I think the view of the whole walk-through process has changed and that is because we have created together a learning community. I truly believe that has happened from the district administration all the way down. I think it has maybe taken a while to build trust, but I think most people believe that now, that it is about everybody's learning, and learning together.* [Coach C]

No one on the superintendent's leadership team would describe their reform as a linear process. It was a much more dynamic process—a work in progress they made up as they learned more. It was, however, an intentional and informed progression toward a vision. Each next step was based on the data they collected while in the schools. Principals and coaches figured prominently in their plans.

**Coach Training**

The first year of the CEL partnership (2005-2006) was an intense year of learning for the elementary literacy coaches.[10] They attended the instructional practice sessions with their principals and a few teacher leaders, they had their own day of coach training with Katherine Casey (the day following the instructional practice day), and they met with the district's literacy coach for one additional half-day in between Katherine's visits. During that year, they were encouraged to find a teacher who was interested in the work who would share their classroom as a place for the coach to practice what they were learning. The expectations for the coaches that year were not that they would become trainers right away, but that they would practice what they were learning and be willing to make their practice public as they learned. First and foremost, the instructional practice sessions strengthened the coaches' understanding of balanced literacy and the conditions required to support powerful instruction. Again, Katherine's triangle guided their efforts to try-on the work in other teachers' classrooms. One coached explained, "*The triangle really makes sense because I don't know my kids. I know this text. I know what I want to do with it. I don't know if they've been working on it or not.*"

Similarly, the consistent modeling by Katherine that purpose had to guide plans and expectations for what students needed to know and be able to do became a consistent emphasis in coaches' work with teachers. It was almost embarrassing for one coach to admit that:

> *Oh, my gosh, it takes somebody from out of state to come and make sense of our own GLE's for us. But that day she came in and turned them all into questions, we went, "That would make so much sense to our staff." So, we did that right away with our staff and they really liked that too. So, now, everybody is really comfortable with their GLE book. They carry it around all the time. Before, it used to just sit on the shelf.* [Coach A]

The training that coaches valued most was their own day with Katherine when they learned how to coach. These days were also filled with additional content, as building expertise was critical for them to become effective in their role. In essence, coaches were being given a preview of where the work was heading and the time to research the topics they would be expected to lead in the future. This was particularly helpful in enabling coaches to develop the knowledge and skills they needed to do their jobs:

> *I think having the learning ahead of when we were expected to bring it back to our staff, the fact that we started the PD a year ahead was really helpful, because I felt like I was at least seeing what was going to happen. It was always really clear that our role was to be the beachhead, to be the person that started the ball rolling and then pass it on.* [Coach C]

Sometimes the coach training set aside time for questions and answers, which coaches used to get help with solving specific problems. For example, one coach sought advice about scheduling. She wanted to know:

[10] There were no 'official' secondary literacy coaches at this point. Members of the secondary leadership teams attempted to assume some of the 'coach' responsibilities, but without release time, their role was more limited and they did not participate in the coach training until spring 2006.

> *How do I keep all the balls in the air? 'Cause there's so many different things going on and I felt like when it was time for me to do one of those five professional development days, I felt like all the one-on-one support and all that was just dropping.* [Coach B]

Others wanted to know where to find good read aloud materials or how to work with teachers who thought they didn't need to change, but most agreed that learning how to coach was especially valuable:

> *When Katherine would go side by side and coach with a person who had given her the opportunity—I wish those had been video taped. I would have liked to have seen it again, seen it again and seen it again, because it is a real person. It is really Marysville students. The second most helpful would be—I just think there is no substitute for having to actually do it. Not just help someone do it. I think how deeply you coach depends on how much you do and how much you teach.* [Coach D]

One of the next steps for coaches was coaching cycles. Coaching cycles are designed to give ongoing support (ideally in consecutive days) as teachers develop aspects of their teaching practice.[11] The notion of 'coaching cycles' was introduced mid-year as a vision of what their coaching practice with teachers would eventually look like, but they started small by learning together. One of the coaching days with Katherine took place at a school site, where they almost took over the school for the morning. The coaches were divided into triads and asked to take turns experiencing three different roles. One would be the teacher and demonstrate a read aloud, one would be the scribe and do her best to script the lesson, and the other would play the role of coach, and look for a teaching point that would help strengthen the coaches' practice. Then they would switch roles until each one experienced all three. This was an innovative way to immerse the coaches in three aspects of the coaching role in one morning with support from colleagues. Katherine shared her observations of what she saw and facilitated a debrief of what they learned from the experience. Some of the coaches found the experience so valuable that they created their own triads and set up time to try it again at each others schools.

The coaches were encouraged to gradually start coaching teachers who they were comfortable working with and who were receptive. It started out as a mix of doing demonstration lessons, planning together, observing, and offering feedback. By spring a few of the coaches began experimenting with coaching cycles, although this was not an expectation. One motivating factor was that coaches found that when they spent an extended amount of time with one teacher, they could begin to see the difference as practices began to change. One coach shared her attempts to use the concept of gradual release coaching cycle:

> *The one that I've done with some of my teachers is they want to work on their questioning and improve the way they're asking questions within their read alouds. So generally with that one I would watch them first because I want to*

[11] See Casey, K. (2006). Literacy coaching: The essentials, Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, Chapter 6, "Models of Intensive Classroom Support" for descriptions of coaching cycles.

> *know what kind of questions they're asking and then we would talk about maybe one or two specific things that they might want to work on …. Then I did a lesson where I tried to really do a lot of that so that she could see it and then gradually release to the end of the cycle where she was doing the teaching. There's debriefing everyday after the lesson and then planning for the next one and then at the end we debrief and kind of set a goal as to where they want to go next.* [Coach E]

During that year, when the middle level schools did not officially have coaches, their teacher leaders used department or grade-level meetings to share the work. The instructional practice sessions gave the teacher leaders approaches, techniques, and materials (engaging literature) that they distributed to their colleagues. Only one department chair was able to use the department meetings as a forum for demonstrating lessons and engaging the department in experimenting with new approaches. For most of the secondary schools, scheduling was the major challenge because they were not officially 'coaches' and had no release time to do that kind of work. As a result, the waiver days often provided their only occasion for working with the colleagues.

Coaches also played a central role in working with their principals and leadership teams to plan the school-based PD. Their roles varied from supporting the principals who led the work, to co-planning and jointly leading the training, to at least one school where the literacy coach found herself 'on her own' in planning and conducting the training for the whole staff.

**Waiver Days**[12]

Having five waiver days, plus the 4 days in August before school, was a new development in Marysville. Prior to fall 2005, the schools only had two days prior to the start of school to do all of their planning and training for the year. The Nyland administration, together with the union, applied for waiver days from the state. Once approved, the waiver days became the major forum for the leadership teams to involve the entire school in learning about literacy.[13]

The year the district began their partnership with CEL, the district leaders' priority became preparing principals to use their leadership teams to take full advantage of those waiver days and be able to deliver powerful professional development. In the beginning, most schools would present whatever Katherine Casey had taught, but in a mini-version to fit into the brief time slot they had for staff development. As one principal told us:

> *If we learned about independent reading there, we taught independent reading here. If we learned something about read alouds, we taught that here. There are a few exceptions, with where we didn't know enough, like shared reading. So I'd say it's had a huge influence. What we do is what they teach us.* [Principal C]

[12] Waiver Days are days granted by Washington State to waive the requirement of 180 days of student attendance if those student-free days are used for school improvement.

[13] In negotiation with the union, the district agreed that half of each day would be devoted to the district's agenda and the other half would be used for 'teacher needs.'

They soon found that it was information overload for teachers as they usually tried to cover too much at a surface level. They discovered they needed to step back and think about what it was that their staff needed at a given point to help them move their practice. This was when they began to understand what the superintendent meant with his often repeated phrase, *Why this? Why now?*

Our interview data from ten building teams (2 middle level and eight elementary) reveal that they did their best to use the To-With-and-By framework to help their staffs experience some of the richness of their learning at the instructional practice sessions. This was not always easy:

> *We would always put ourselves out there and model whatever we were asking them to do. I mean, I did lots of modeling in front of the staff, as far as a read aloud, as far as questioning strategies, as far as charting techniques. We were always putting ourselves out there first to model. The principal would always say as he started, "Okay, I'm going to try this for you guys, you know." Like we were always, always, always working under the idea that none of us are experts that we're all just giving it a try. Our principal is awesome too because he's never like the top-down type guy. He's just like one of the team and that's what you really need as a leader because he immerses himself in all that we're doing. He fumbles. He'll go through something and he'll say, "Oh, that was a little shaky."* [Coach E]

Some schools were able to recreate the excitement that they had experienced for their staff by trying to model what they saw to be effective. But they also found that once they got people excited they had to find additional time to learn:

> *We do Larry's to-with-and-by so they have some sort of an experience with that during that training and then they're off trying it on their own. We've used a lot of additional days, half days, and support in the building so the teachers by grade levels can go and watch each other and learn from each other. They plan together, they work together, they do a lot of discussion, and my reading coach has been tremendous in supporting them.* [Principal B]

But in some cases the enthusiasm created its own set of problems:

> *Second grade just jumped right in. Way, way in. They were so stressed out and we'd say, "But look what you're doing. You're trying to do it all. We're only asking you to do this much but you're taking on these other three things. Yeah, you're doing amazing things but that's why you're stressed." The people here have really taken it on.* [Coach A]

Pacing became another learning opportunity, and most schools realized that it was important to focus on two or three try-ons, like the district had originally asked of them:

> *That was one of our focuses this year. Along with our read alouds was the GLE's and understanding the purpose behind those read alouds and then*

> *the engagement work are the three that we narrowed in on. We narrowed in on that relatively early in the year but then again, it's kind of this push forward and then back up and support is the process that we've gone through throughout the year. So, we'll push forward and let them know about the GLE's and that needs to be part of it then back up and provide the support by doing a book study of the GLE book.* [Coach B]

At the middle level, leadership teams struggled with engaging math and science teachers who didn't see the relevance of reading strategies to their responsibility to teach content. For them it seemed student engagement strategies, including the use of more engaging text materials, were one way to connect them to the literacy initiative. But "*giving up that control*" to the students was scary to many middle level teachers who knew how challenging middle school students could be. Those who tried on some of the strategies found that getting students involved in class discussions was a form of accountability – the strategies were ways of keeping kids accountable for doing the work.

As the district leaders observed the waiver days, they learned that literacy had definitely become the focus in every school, and that principals and their leadership teams were making a valiant effort to lead the work at their schools. They also recognized that the teams needed more support. They decided that they needed to provide more explicit modeling and a visible structure for teachers and principals to be able to use the ideas to design their own professional development. Two additional structures were designed to provide this support to principals: one was the principal triads; the other was the continuation of instructional leadership sessions they had initiated in 2004-05.

**Principal Triads**

Principal triads were set up to serve a dual purpose. The first was to provide coaching support to principals in a collegial setting. The triads took place at school sites and gave principals a chance to visit each other's schools. The second purpose was for the CEL consultant to simultaneously coach the central office administrators in how to coach principals in their role as instructional leaders. The goal of this collaborative work was for principals to eventually take charge of their own learning, to determine what their learning needs were and find the sources that would teach them what they need to know.

Kimiko Fukuda was brought in to coach the elementary principals and Wilma Kozai coached the secondary principals. One of the CEL consultants explained the nature of her work:

> *So how do you have a walk through that's intentional? You're using it not only to assess the work that the principal's doing but also using any available moment to teach how to connect what you've been learning from one walk to the next. And, the expectation is that you will see what you're teaching reflected in what's going on in the schools. And, if not, to investigate is it because of our teaching or is it because they're not taking on the work?*

In the beginning of the year, Kimiko or Wilma would lead a group of three principals. They would set the purpose for the day. The group would visit classrooms and come back together to analyze what they saw. The district leaders started out largely in an observer role, taking notes about the questions the facilitator asked, the feedback they gave, and what they noticed as evidence of teachers' practice. As they moved between classes, the consultant explained what she was doing (thinking aloud) for the district leaders to make her coaching moves transparent.

By the spring, the lead had shifted to the district leaders. One of the directors took responsibility for opening the day, setting the purpose. The host principal explained what they had been working on in the school, the classrooms they would be visiting, and the supports the teacher had had. After the classroom visits, once again the district administrator led the debrief discussion. She charted the feedback. Kimiko took notes and listened carefully to the discussion. If she had seen something that others missed, she would add her observations, usually in the form of a question rather than a statement. By the end of the day, the group would develop some summary conclusions and suggest some possible next steps that would help the principals coach the teachers to hone their practice.

Principals found these days helped them expand their perspectives and learn to watch for key indicators, as one principal explained:

> *She always forces us to look at what are we seeing differently. What are we seeing from our staff that's different now? What changes have we seen in our children that tells us that we're moving in the right direction? And, then she's also very good about helping us find just the exact right step, the next piece for a teacher to take on. She can pick that up from one time visiting a classroom. She's amazing. And she's good about making sure that we're pushing hard enough—to make sure that we are challenging ourselves. She'll make sure that we're just going to extend it a little bit more without over doing it, without killing the teachers, and expecting too much. She has a knack for doing that. She's very good. She's also been very good just with organizing our ideas on what we can do with professional development on our next waiver day. She can look at the whole picture and help us come up with next steps…And she listens intently, that's another thing. She understands every thing you say. She'll restate it, rephrase it, and she's nailed it, even though we talk in circles.* [Principal B]

Another principal found the triads to be her most important source of professional learning because it was an opportunity to learn with colleagues:

> *The triads put us in smaller groups where people are more free to talk, where you talk about real things and real people and the issues that we face all of the time. Now we could ratchet that up with more training, in those situations, more dialogue. Kimiko's role is as our facilitator. It is a good role. She did not dominate. She asked questions, helped us see what*

*was really there that we might not even have the skill yet to see. At first, she and Wilma were so scary because I didn't have an answer. She asks really hard questions and I didn't want to look stupid. Now I see they have been so helpful. They really are good coaches. They are very helpful in asking questions and stimulating thinking.* [Principal E]

Wilma coached the middle level principals. The challenges were different at the middle level with the different content orientation, where not all teachers believed that their job included teaching reading. Moreover, the three middle level schools were in different places. All the principals felt they benefited from being able to visit each other's schools to 'steal' good ideas:

*When I go to their school and I go from class to class, regardless of what the teacher's doing there's a consistent method to their madness that's visible that you can see that they're all moving. And, I would say in this building it's probably fifty-fifty, so that helps me. It gives me a sense of where we are and where we need to be. I try to pick their brain about the structure in their school that allows them to do a more comprehensive job of in-service than we do. The thing is that we all do a pretty good job of in-service on those special days but it's between those waiver days that I think they have a better system for growing the work than what we do.* [Principal F]

It was also clear from the attendance at the instructional practice sessions, the coaching support, and their greater knowledge and experience with teaching reading that the elementary schools were further along. To help the middle level principals see the differences and develop a vision of what they were working toward, one day the middle level triad went to visit an elementary school:

*One of my favorite days was when we went to an elementary school. We went and watched the fifth grade teacher, who is quite accomplished already. That was another "aha" for me to witness a teacher who not only taught the components of the balanced literacy and did the strategies, but then she left them with a transferable skill. Her closure was how what they'd worked on all day was a transferable skill. "What we learned today remember we can do this… We can use it here. We can use it here. We can use it here." And, that was a very powerful thing for me to remember that closure is so important and that the real reason for learning any of these skills is to use them somewhere and not just in isolation.* [Principal F]

Not only did the triads have a dual purpose in providing coaching for district administrators and building principals simultaneously, they also built into the arrangement an intentional gradual release. Just as Kimiko's role became less of a presenter and more of a facilitator over the course of the year, the district has also used this collaborative structure to encourage the principal triads to become their own learning communities. By the end of the 2007 school year a few of the triads had already conducted their own triad visits and the plan is to gradually decrease the number of days

the CEL consultants will be needed to guide their work around content and the principals' leadership role in pushing the work forward.

Generally, principals didn't point to single events or one professional development format that was key for them, rather they felt it was the immersion in literacy work—the confluence of multiple learning opportunities and the consistency of the focus that made it difficult to separate their learning. They saw the training as interdependent. It was the connections between all the learning that demonstrated to one principal the clarity of the district's vision:

> *I'd say what's exciting here is that you can trace that chain of evidence—the planning has a real intent and purpose, and you are able to see it all the way through to the point of classroom implementation with kids. That's what we are attempting to do as a system, which is I think, pretty unusual work. The partnership with CEL is huge too. If that wasn't there, would this work be the same? No. If Larry was getting coached by CEL, if Larry is coaching his next group, and that group is coaching me and I am coaching the coach and the teachers, and they are coaching each other. That is happening. There is a coaching model that is basic to what is going on from this level to this level to this level. It has had a huge impact on my school.* [Principal C]

**District-led Principal Instructional Leadership**

To create a district of instructional leaders, the leadership team knew they had to keep building content knowledge, but they also wanted to focus on leadership practices that would be the building blocks needed for guiding instructional improvement. The instructional practice sessions intentionally built into the end of each session a reflective piece to help building leaders understand the purpose and the importance of the process. The district then created the triad structure to build community and sharpen principal's observational skills. Continuing the training they began the first year in the district, the district leaders also devoted another half day a month to running their own instructional leadership trainings for administrators. The instructional leadership sessions turned out to be the most challenging for the district leadership team because they had to lead it themselves, and there was no blueprint to follow to develop leadership around balanced literacy. The CEL project director provided feedback and suggestions, but these trainings had to be tailored to the system they were building in Marysville. So far the focus of those instructional leadership sessions has been around writing instructional memos, planning professional development, and developing principals' leadership voice.

The superintendent expected principals to be able to write instructional memos that made their core beliefs explicit and that continually reminded their staff what their goals were and why they were making a commitment to continue to improve their practice. One district leader explained how the instructional memos were designed to bring out leadership voice:

> *By doing the instructional memos, you're being very clear and explicit about what it is we're about, where we're headed, and I think that*

*sometimes we assume people know what we're doing. And this is the way to really get it down on paper as a combination planning tool, a communication tool and also a reflection tool. I think for principals it really is an opportunity for them to reflect.*

Planning PD for their staff is considered to be one of the principal's most important leadership responsibilities. Time is a constant limitation and five half-days during the school year is not much to teach all that they want teachers to learn, so it is critical that principals make the most of the time they have and that they use that training to set expectations that staff will be held accountable for. It's what Larry calls 'asking for the order'—setting the expectation for what they expect to see in classrooms as a result of the professional development.

Most of the professional development for principals at this point has been in the form of whole group instruction. The principal triads have been the exception. The challenge will be finding ways to differentiate the leadership training to give principals what they need, when they need it. New principals will need a different kind of support to learn their job and catch up on the literacy work. At the other extreme, those who have excelled in leading their staffs now need support for moving to the next level. There are already a few veterans who shared that the instructional leadership sessions, although good, were not quite satisfying their immediate needs.

Overwhelmingly, principals report that their professional learning has never been richer. The cumulative effect of all the training—the instructional practice, the instructional leadership training, support for a literacy team to spearhead the work, the triads, the opportunity to visit other schools inside and outside the district—has helped to create a community of learners. It has also created an awareness of how much they have yet to learn—if only they had the time to learn it all.

### Year 2 (2006-07) Increasing optimism—"We might just make it." *Larry Nyland*

**Blended Professional Development Summer School**

Year 2 of the Marysville-CEL partnership began with summer school. Summer school 2006 introduced the concept of studio classrooms. For the first time, Marysville brought in three different CEL consultants with specialization at different levels. One concentrated on primary, one on intermediate grades and middle school (grades 4-8), and one worked with high school teachers. The summer school sites identified a few teachers who volunteered to have their classrooms serve as demonstration sites, or studio classrooms. Substitutes were hired to release teachers on the days consultants were in the schools so that teachers could observe lesson planning, the actual lesson with children, and then debrief what they observed. Consultants began by teaching the lessons themselves while others watched, with the goal of gradually releasing responsibility to the teachers (team teaching, coaching side-by-side). Teachers found the experience so valuable that they asked district leaders to continue the practice during the school year. To district leaders it was one more confirmation of their belief that 'seeing is believing,' so they found the resources to make it possible.

Principals were encouraged, but not required to participate in as much of the summer school learning as they could (while on vacation). The walk-throughs continued throughout summer school so principals had the opportunity to learn from the consultant's studio work and teachers experimenting with new practices. Many of them continued their learning by gathering at Gail Miller's home in the evening to discuss what they saw and process together what they were learning.

Principals, teachers, and coaches all underscored how much they learned in Year 1 from seeing CEL consultants demonstrate expert practice. We heard many versions of the same refrain:

> *It's the modeling … its one thing to get all these wonderful handouts but you really need to watch Katherine do it. She is really a master at it… it makes it so much more meaningful. So for me when she does a lesson with kids, and she has talked about what she is going to do before hand, we know what we are looking for, we know what the purpose is, we know what her strategies are going to be, and then we actually watch her do it is huge.* [Teacher C]

But the schools didn't yet have the capacity to recreate that experience for the rest of their staffs. District leaders were guided by the research of Joyce and Showers (1982)[14] that demonstrated that new practices will never get past 50 percent implementation if educators do not have the opportunity to see what it looks like.

**Leadership Retreat**

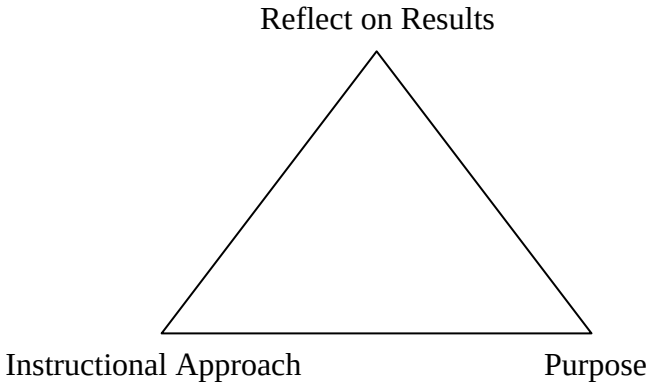
At the leadership retreat in August 2006, the district leaders charged principals with identifying a school goal for the year and to focus all of their professional development toward that goal. They were advised to use all of their resources, waiver days, substitutes, building coaches, and studio classrooms to give as many of their teachers as possible the opportunity to see what they were working towards. District leaders and CEL consultants used the leadership retreat to help principals plan the four half-days they had before school started to begin to develop a schoolwide goal. They provided the principals with a DVD that included a video of Larry and Gail explaining two new components to the literacy and leadership work for the coming year.

One idea, the *Habits of Thinking*, had been introduced earlier in May (2006) during the instructional practice session. On top of Katherine's triangle Larry overlaid another triangle that described a decision making process he called the 'Habits of Thinking' (see Figure 4). This second triangle began with *Reflecting on Results,* by asking the question,

[14] Joyce and Showers found that with presentation alone about the most one can expect to get is 85% understanding, 15% skill attainment and 10% application in the classroom. With modeling (seeing it) application only increases slightly. If you add practice, the concept understanding remains at 85%, but skill attainment goes up to 80%, yet still only 15% apply. At most, you can't get past 50% until you add feedback. If you add coaching, with feedback, according to Joyce and Showers it goes up to 90% for concept understanding, 90% now have skill attainment, and 80% can apply it.

'Where are teachers now?' It continued with using available data to determine one's *Purpose*— 'What do I want teachers to know and be able to do?' Having defined the purpose, the principals then would figure out what was the appropriate *Instructional Approach.* Principals had to think about what professional learning experiences would help teachers acquire the necessary knowledge and skills ('How will I get them there?') and then return to reflecting on results and identify what would signify teachers' learning ('What evidence will tell me when they've gotten there?').

**Figure 4. Habits of Thinking**




The second new focus the district leaders promoted was building *Communities of Practice.* The goal was to increasingly make everyone's (district leaders, CEL consultants, building leaders, coaches, and teachers) practice public to create opportunities to learn from each other. This expectation was largely left up to the schools to find ways to make this happen. Some did this through grade level or department teams; others organized groups around teachers' learning needs.

In addition to the video, principals received a packet of materials to use to plan their 2006 opening of school. And then, as is their practice, the district leaders went out and did walk-throughs to see how the materials were implemented during the professional development. As they reflected on the results they saw, the leadership team was pleased:

> *My goodness. I've got to run faster. I've got to get to all of these schools because they're teaching good things that I don't know about. They are moving faster than I am, so, that was exciting.* [Administrator C]

With that strong start, Year 2 of the partnership continued all of the structures for professional learning instituted in Year 1. But within each learning environment, the focus was to go deeper, revisit ideas that were introduced in Year 1, and spend more time observing and analyzing instruction. District leaders constantly emphasized and modeled how to use the Habits of Thinking to inform all of their decisions. They reprinted for the principals a particularly relevant passage from Katherine Casey's new book, *Literacy Coaching: The Essentials*, (p. 24-25) where she clearly explained how teachers and coaches (including principals when coaching teachers) had to consider multiple factors

and sources of data in the countless instructional decisions they make everyday. Practicing the 'habits of thinking' in each of these decisions is part of the ongoing effort to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to 'figure it out' – how to strengthen support for student learning. The assistant superintendent explained the leadership team's thinking in an instructional memo. She wrote that "*we often think that experts are just naturally brilliant*." But the reality is that they developed their expertise by "*reading articles over and over to develop their understanding.*" Year 2 was designed to build the schools' expertise, asking more of principals and coaches. They began increasing expectations by asking principals and coaches to read Katherine Casey's book. As they raised the bar, district leaders knew they had to ensure that they provided the resources needed to fulfill the expectations. They found the funds to provide professional books for leaders and classroom libraries to encourage classroom teachers to move from trying on the literacy strategies to taking them on as part of their regular practice.

One example of the increased expectation was the work of the coaches. In Year 1 the literacy coaches were introduced to the idea of coaching cycles. In Year 2, CEL consultants began by coaching one of the literacy coaches while the whole group observed and participated in the debriefing. Although a few coaches started experimenting at the end of year 1, the expectation was that by January 2007, all of the literacy coaches would begin coaching cycles with a few willing teachers. One coach, who started early with three day coaching cycles, was able to work regularly with four teachers throughout the year using five-day cycles, and did at least one coaching cycle in four other classrooms. This was the exception. Some coaches had yet to begin coaching cycles at the end of Year 2, as building confidence and trust took longer than expected.

**Studio Classrooms**

The one significant addition the district leaders made in Year 2 was to support studio classrooms so teachers would have the opportunity to see 'over and over' expert instruction and learn side-by-side with consultants in their own classrooms. The goal was to help teachers incorporate what they saw into their own practice. Table 2 summarizes the characteristics of the new studio classrooms.

**Table 2**
**2006-2007 Supports for learning for district and building leaders**

| Learning Environment | Participants | Content | Frequency | Typical Activities |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Studio Sessions** | **CEL consultant; Literacy coaches and lead teachers from 3 schools in a triad; Principals** | **Balanced Literacy; Powerful instruction** | **3-4 days per school per year** | **Observations of planning, demonstration lessons, and debriefing; Discussion of professional literature** |

Given finite resources, the district wrestled with how to distribute the resources for studio classrooms. The tension lay between providing equal access for every school or building a stronger beachhead by investing heavily in a few schools. The choices, one administrator explained were not easy:

> *So, one theory of action is that we're trying to grow a studio classroom to replace [CEL consultants] as quickly as possible. At some point in time we want to have enough people who can lead and demonstrate the work. I mean we'll want to go deeper and broader with those people, but we want to go as fast as we possibly can with our leaders and that makes some sense because the people that we have invited into watch them are going to be charging right behind them, they will have the readiness to benefit.* [Administrator C]

The other option, which the district chose, was to try to grow their sense of community in the district. If they continued to invest in just a few leaders, they feared they would *'leave too many behind and we'll weaken the core and our supply lines will be cut off.*' They didn't want to exclude anyone, so they chose to divide resources evenly among the schools. CEL consultants visited each school in the district two to three times throughout the year.[15] Principals, in consultation with district leaders, strategically identified studio classrooms and decided which teachers to release to observe the work.[16] The intention was that each school would negotiate with their consultant(s) to target their work together around their school goal.

The work looked different in each of the schools, depending on the clarity of the school goal, how the school leaders aligned the studio work to support that goal, and the support the school was able to provide in between studio days to maintain the continuity and focus of their work. The following vignette illustrates how one school utilized their resources to get the most out of their work with CEL consultant, Laura VanDerPloeg.

Each studio was divided into two sections: morning and afternoon, with two different studio classrooms. Throughout the year, the school attempted to remain consistent by using the same classrooms for each studio.

> *It is Laura's first studio classroom day with this school, but she is already familiar with several of the teachers sitting around the table, having worked with them in summer school. Prior to the visit, Laura has contacted the two teachers whose classrooms she will be using to decide the focus of the lesson. Studio work is a challenging assignment for consultants, as they have*

[15] Each elementary school worked with two different consultants, one for primary and one for intermediate grades. The elementaries were also paired with another school and were allowed to bring a small number of teachers to observe the studio days in their partner school, thus increasing their exposure to the consultant's expertise. The middle schools worked with only one consultant as did the high schools. The junior high, due to its configuration worked with both the middle and high school consultants for their studio work. As a result, the actual number of studio days varied slightly across the schools.

[16] Although the district provided the funding, there were still considerable costs the schools had to cover. One principal reported that six days of studio classrooms cost the school $7,800 to cover the cost for substitutes.

*limited time to get to learn the culture of the school or build relationships with principals and teachers. It's difficult to make informed decisions about what schools need. All they had to go on were teachers' responses to a series of questions: "Tell me about your students. What have you noticed about these readers and writers? What have you been working on in your teaching? How would you describe the way you run your classroom?"—things that give the consultant a view into the teachers' schema for their teaching practice so that they will have 'a stake in their learning in the consulting work.'*

During the morning session, Laura works with Ted,[17] a teacher she has emailed several times and talked to on the phone. Ted is a first year teacher who came to Marysville last year as a long-term substitute and is teaching 8th- and 9th-grade Language Arts. A history major in college, Ted envisioned teaching Social Studies and feels uncomfortable at times with aspects of Language Arts.

At the beginning of the meeting in the library, Laura recaps the conversations she has had with Ted about his class and what they have decided to work on. Ted explains what he sees as an issue in his students' writing:

*What I notice is students need a lot of help in clarifying their writing. Students have a thesis, then have random points that do not support that thesis. (Teacher laughter)*

*Laura responds, "Is that a laugh of recognition?"*

Many in the English department are working on analytical essays on themes they found in short stories. Teachers have been using teacher-generated thesis statements and guiding students in their writing to support that thesis. Ted is frustrated that the students do not seem to understand how to support these thesis statements through specific examples in the literature. Other teachers agree.

Laura must decide what she wants to use as an entry point to discuss their practice. She wonders if Ted's frustration with his students' work may be an indication of the students' abilities to make meaning from text. She shares some of this thinking with the group before explaining the lesson they are about to observe. She hands out some of the materials she will be using in the lesson and suggests teachers focus on student talk, student questions, and teacher talk during the lesson:

*Laura first informs the class of the purpose of the lesson-- to find patterns in literature--and then hands out copies of the short story, "Homework." For the next thirty minutes, Laura demonstrates a shared reading, including techniques like turning and talking to their neighbors[18] and charting.[19] After reading half of the short story, Laura transitions into writing by sharing with the students a response she has written* [sharing her thinking] *and asking the students to go back to their desks to*

[17] Ted is a pseudonym.

[18] 'Turn and talk' is short hand for asking student to talk to a partner. The purpose is to stimulate student talk and thinking.

[19] Charting refers to the practice of recording student thoughts or class progress on chart paper to provide a scaffold for students to use in future classes.

*write in their notebooks. They are to choose one line from the reading that they found significant and "write what it makes you think about what the character is going through. Try to get about a page."*

Following the lesson, the teachers have one and a half hours for the debrief. Laura has collected the students' notebooks and spreads them across the table as "data" for their discussion. The debrief focuses on what the teachers know students can do, the evidence they see in the work, and what this may mean for next steps in instruction.

*Laura creates a T-chart. One side lists "Reflections on Teaching" and the other, "Reflections on Student Learning." After engaging in their own turn and talks, the teachers share some insights on the lesson they just observed. One offered:*
*We talked about the students using their own quotation. It seems more authentic.*

*Laura: If we're talking about students' making meaning, it is important to let students make meaning. A prompt takes away this step of invention.*

*Laura writes under reflections on teaching, "Let students have choice about response" and, "Students can be more invested in their ideas when they have choice" under reflections on student learning. By the end of the session, Ted and the literacy coach have discussed the value and logistics of altering their writing responses from a teacher-generated prompt format to a student-generated assignment.*

Although the concern Ted vocalized at the beginning of the meeting was about students' writing abilities, Laura has chosen to model a lesson that ties reading work to the writing. In Laura's view, she offers a chance for Ted and the others to study practice; she is not producing a magic formula for success. She tells the group:

*We're going to gather up their work, look at what the kids are doing, and plan for* [the next day]. *No magic here. We want to get smarter about how we're thinking about planning.*

In between studio visits, the school's literacy coach is permitted to release the entire department to continue the work they started on the studio day. The coach models a lesson using a non-fiction piece and has the teachers choose one line from the essay to write about.

*The teachers write vigorously, and then ask if they could trade notebooks, just as they would ask their students to do.*

Two weeks later, and two and a half months after her first visit, Laura returns for her next studio classrooms. This will be her third day at the school and, like the last time, she has spoken to Ted via email about what he and his students need. Ted's students are reading *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding.

*Laura starts the meeting by asking teachers to read some of Ted's students' journal entries on Lord of the Flies and discuss what students*

*are able to do in these entries. The group agrees the writings show some inferring, but they "want to get them to go somewhere." Laura explains that the lesson today will help students elaborate on their journal writing.*

*During the studio the teachers position themselves around the room. This time when the students sit on the floor, the teachers sit closer to the students to be able to listen in on their conversations. Ted participates more in this lesson than the last time Laura visited, first introducing the purpose of the lesson: "how to go deeper and explore the ideas you are writing about in your journals."*

*Laura shows a student journal entry on the document camera and reads it aloud to the class. This begins a discussion about how the writer developed her thoughts and introduces techniques other students can use to stretch their own writing. During the lesson, seven teachers are taking notes and regularly pull up to students to hear their discussions or read their writing responses.*

After the lesson, the teachers meet back in the library to debrief. Once again, the teachers analyze the students' journals and discuss what they understand about the students' learning. This time Laura acts as a facilitator for the conversation, leading teachers' investigation of practice, rather than an expert delivering knowledge. Ted explains what he did after this last studio classroom with Laura:

*Throughout the book, I had the students keep a reader's notebook that we worked on with Lord of the Flies and after she left what I did to continue that work with the class is we brainstormed ways to return to the theme or topics that we saw coming out of leadership, respect, human nature, society, rules. And, we had a list of maybe fifteen or twenty different things and I had the students pick the one they thought they were the most interested in.*

The studio experience has made Ted realize he has been doing most of the work, leading the students to his answers. By giving students choice, he learns that "*students [are] actually able to look at their own work—that their biggest struggle [is] just hearing their own voice. That was one of the most powerful things that came out of this assignment."*

Seeing such a visible influence of professional development on practice is rare, and this demonstrates the strength of this model of embedded coaching. The studio classrooms are situated in the Marysville teachers' real issues and practices. Consultants try to take into consideration teachers' prior knowledge and expertise, in order to make the learning collaborative. The studio and Laura's lessons offer teachers an opportunity to observe 'powerful images' of teaching and reflection on instruction. One of the critical factors that made this studio work productive was the coach's ability to carry on and support the work in the long span between the consultant's visits.

Time is a serious limitation and is one reason this school has built common planning time into their schedule for next year so that teachers can continue to collaborate. Other schools found other ways to make the studios productive.

At one elementary school the principal chose one primary and one intermediate teacher as the studio teachers. She explained her rationale for the selections:

> *I chose people that were already taking on the work, and were motivated to take on the work and were the kind of people that could impart knowledge to others, the kind of people that would be able to be sensitive to others and were respected enough that people would listen to them.*

She later identified one additional studio classroom at each grade level and asked the literacy coach to help these teachers develop their classrooms as sites where their grade-level colleagues could come to observe so that they could work together to grow their practice. She continued:

> *I don't think that I consciously decided on a studio classroom. What I decided is that people needed to watch one another, that because we, the coaches, myself, and the leadership team, got to go in and out and see all of this work, that other teachers didn't get to see and really that is the most powerful learning for them, to see it in action and to see it with their kids. So it is also about building the culture where people are really supporting one another.*

This arrangement also created an opportunity to show an excellent teacher, who was very shy, just how strong her practice was. Once her confidence grew, she became a team leader and others turned to her as a model to emulate.

Not all of the schools were able to create the level of coherence seen in these two examples. In some cases, this was because their building goal wasn't clear until late in the year. A few schools lost studio days or delayed return visits from the consultant due to snow days. In other cases, consultants didn't make their first studio visit to a school until May, which eliminated any opportunity for them to gradually release the work to the studio teachers. Although some of these teachers had observed a studio at another school, it was their first opportunity to work with a consultant in their classroom. Further, high schools did not have literacy coaches.

All of the consultants expressed frustration with the limited impact they were able to make in the small number of days with long time lapses between their visits:

> *I could do two days, coaching from one day to the next, but the frustration is when there's really not an opportunity for me to support teachers after I've worked with them in their classroom in a way that helps them really make sense out of their learning on their own. It's sort of small-scale coaching.* [Consultant A]

All three agreed that two days back-to-back at one school might get greater leverage:

> *I just see so much more traction, so much faster in [another district], because I go to the same schools, the same studio classrooms every month. The whole idea of coaching is to move the kids too. So if they can see that movement in the kids across time they believe in the work. Part of my job is to change core belief systems. So, I think its spread too thin. I think that should be part of our studio work to walk through the school because a lot of us don't see any of those rooms except studio teachers. It would give me more to access to inform my instruction.* [Consultant B]

Consultants also recognized that they do not want schools to become dependent on their support. The challenge is to find the right mix that provides enough exposure and coaching to learn new practices, build capacity, and internalize what they've learned. At the end of the year, one consultant thought hard about how to make the studio work in Marysville more effective:

> *I think it's my job to always hold that bigger picture in mind for the people and if the district is looking at read aloud—how does that fit within their picture—and then nurture that work to give teachers the tools. And, so, it's not, when am I coming back, but it's how do we take this into our practice? So, coaches and teachers can nurture that work on their own and that means some consultants really should be working themselves out of a job and that's a healthy thing.* [Consultant C]

The consultants agreed that teachers needed to see explicit modeling. The first year of studio work has generated excitement, motivation, and a hunger for more. It will be up to district leaders and CEL consultants to develop a schedule and a process that will maximize teachers' learning from this powerful form of professional development and create the kind of immersion experience they have done so well for principals and coaches.

The impact of the studio was substantial in some schools, but district leaders were aware that the effectiveness varied considerably across the district. That variability generated a new practice in spring 2007. The leadership team had been conducting walk-throughs for two years to monitor what schools were gleaning from all of the professional development, which practices were being implemented, and where to target additional training. To get a more thorough assessment of the district's progress, the district leaders decided to do a 'Big Walk.' An elaborate schedule was developed to expand the walks to see every classroom in elementary schools and 35 percent of the classrooms in the middle and high school. One of the district leaders shared that these walks have been a significant learning opportunity for their team to use the habits of thinking to understand where each school is, what their learning needs are, and to develop strategies to address those needs.

**The Marysville-CEL Partnership**

Partnership is a good word to describe Marysville's relationship with CEL—it's an association where parties share and work together for a single purpose. They each bring

valued skills to the partnership. The district leaders agree that CEL contributed expertise in literacy, and in coaching instructional leadership:

> *I think what they provide is a tremendous amount of expertise, very honest feedback--they say the things that need to be said, and also build the relationship at the same time. So, I think they have the permission to really speak honestly. And they ask great questions about the work.* [Administrator B]

The district leaders bring to the partnership extensive leadership experience and skills. The team shares strong beliefs about quality teaching and the responsibilities leaders have in creating a culture throughout the system of working together toward that end. It is clear to CEL and to district staff that Larry is the driver of the reform and that he has surrounded himself with highly capable assistants. We found remarkable consistency in their understanding and beliefs about the work. And CEL consultants acknowledge that they have learned about leadership from watching Larry:

> *You don't have to be in his company long, before you know that he believes instruction is important and that leadership is important. Now, he's still working on what that looks like and sounds like but it's clear through his words and actions.* [Consultant D]

What resonates throughout our interviews and observations is the way the district and CEL have created the literacy initiative together. District leaders were supported by having coaches (the CEL consultants) to help them think through how to structure quality professional development and ongoing support—how to find the right balance between expectation and support. CEL was able to be that critical friend in part because of the extensive involvement of Wilma Kozai, the CEL project director, who participates in many aspects of the district's work. She coaches district leaders and secondary principals either one-on-one or in the triads. She oversees the CEL consultants' work in the district, negotiates calendars, and participates in both short and long-term planning. She is present for many of the instructional practice sessions and some of the leadership work.

All of the members of the superintendent's team attest to Wilma and her colleagues' contribution:

> *I think the area where I'm growing the most is in learning to coach--from my additional reading, from my visits to New York, and honestly, mostly from my relationship with Wilma and the new insights that we have in our walk-throughs. … And so I think one of my learnings is the power of thinking together about something. One individual may not have an idea, but as you think it through together everybody comes away with new insights. A deeper knowledge of instruction itself and the coaching piece that I'm learning from Wilma and Kimiko is just huge. That's been the biggest part of my learning.* [Administrator D]

Another acknowledged Wilma's work in helping the district secure the right people to help with training, but added an important qualification that Wilma's is a coaching role:

> *I don't think she does it for us. Maybe she helps us do our work better and there's a critical distinction there.* [Administrator B]

Principals were often intimidated by their CEL coaches' pointed questions at first, but all we interviewed had come to appreciate their directness and their insights. One principal recalled an especially vivid memory:

> *Going into a class one time in another building, and the teacher obviously tried real hard to put on a balanced literacy show. We got back to the room and Wilma said, "I don't think she does that all the time. Do you? Why would she do that at this time of year? I think she did that because she knows we're coming." I mean those are pretty in-your-face questions and she was right on. (Laughs) I'm sitting there going, "Right on, Wilma." (Laughs)* [Principal F]

But Wilma could also make principals pretty uncomfortable when she would press them on their assessment of instructional practice, "*So what did you think of the questions that teacher used to create student engagement? Were they successful? What might you suggest she try instead?"* She pushed principals to become critical observers of teaching and learning. The pressure was not always as gentle as Larry might have done it, but it was certainly relentlessly applied.

Because of her frequent presence, she has also been able to mediate potential difficulties consultants encountered when things didn't quite work as planned. One of the consultants explained how, with Wilma's help, she was able to model the habits of thinking and turn a potential disaster into a powerful learning experience:

> *It happened today when the first lesson didn't go as well as we had hoped. And, so, in the afternoon studio instead of saying, "Well, this is why," and making excuses we completely ripped it apart and said, "This is how we can make it better," and then went into a different seventh grade classroom and we did it. The experience for the people said, "It's okay," and "my administrator is not looking for the perfect lesson, they're looking for growth, and when they give me advice they want me to take it and try it in the next lesson." So, it was fascinating for them to watch Wilma coach me and for me to be able to immediately take it into my practice. Wilma asked the principals to lead the debrief and although that was really frightening for them, it made the afternoon so much more powerful because the teachers saw it and started putting themselves out there too.* [Consultant C]

The partnership with CEL works well because the partners share mutual respect. CEL consultants appreciate Larry's intentionality in taking each next step—'Why this? Why now?'—and for his willingness to seek and consider others' ideas before making a decision. Another strength of the collaboration is that it follows the principles of how people learn and how lasting change happens—it's a gradual release toward independent sustainability.

One of the directors explained how, in Wilma's coaching, she was expecting him to take responsibility gradually for carrying out the practices she was teaching:

> *We did a lot of the walks together. And we had a lot of dialogue. In the walks Wilma modeled a lot of things that allowed me to learn…how do you coach a principal? How do you coach a leadership team? I think in hindsight, you can see a lot of it was done in the notion of gradual release. In the beginning Wilma led a lot of the conversations, and then as the year progressed, released it to me and the principals more and more. This was a new role for me in terms of working with principals and working with schools, so there was a lot of dialogue, but a lot of it was intentional, trying to release it to the principals and to me to do this work and it was coaching but it wasn't mechanical. There was good flow to the work because it was about the work in the classrooms.* [Administrator B]

Now that the district has brought in multiple consultants, a slight tension has emerged in the partnership. Some teachers are struggling to make sense of different perspectives and terminology. The benefit of having one person do all the training the first year, especially when Katherine listened carefully and adopted the district's terminology in her training, was that teachers always heard a consistent message. By the end of year 2, even the consultants mentioned that there were difficulties not only with language but also with some conceptual understanding and beliefs about practice that were creating confusion for teachers. This is a problem for CEL to solve more than for the district, but it has created some competition between consultants in the eyes of teachers, who are starting to question which consultant's advice to take. The CEL consultants live in different parts of the country and are rarely in the district at the same time, making it difficult to coordinate their work. They do talk on the phone frequently and share their 'lesson plans' on a website but, unfortunately, the four consultants who work in Marysville never had face-to-face planning time where they could coordinate their efforts and support the work from the instructional practice sessions to help keep the district's work moving toward consistent objectives.

**Challenges to Solve**

As CEL and Marysville continue to learn together, there will be new challenges to undertake. Due to their ongoing assessment of the status of the work in schools, district leaders are well aware that to achieve their goal of having 80 percent of staff in each building engaged in improving practice, they will need to increase accountability. In the spring of 2007, the literacy coaches began asking, "*When are we going to stop 'trying it on' and expect teachers to take it on?"* Moving beyond an invitation to an expectation will require that district and building leaders begin giving constructive feedback with suggestions for improvement.

Teachers we interviewed indicated that they are ready, even eager, for helpful suggestions. Although teachers are becoming more comfortable with walk-throughs, many complained that they are not learning experiences for them because they don't get any feedback. Most are no longer concerned about the walks being evaluative, but they

would like to learn from what outsiders see in their classroom. They are asking for what district leaders have already recognized is the next step—gently increasing the pressure.

> *We still aren't at the stage where we are giving feedback and I would say that is one of the biggest barriers to our forward growth. We still aren't quite confident enough to give feedback. It's Bruce Joyce's research on professional development that says you only get 50 percent implementation until you start to give feedback.* [Administrator C]

The superintendent's team has clearly been thinking about how to gradually increase responsibility, expecting educators to take on more of the work. Larry used the language of CMP[20] to assess what they've been doing and what they need to do next:

> *I think what we do too often is, we launch and explore, we launch and explore, we launch and explore and we don't summarize and we don't follow through with the feedback. So we don't have a tightly coupled system yet. Up until now, we have intentionally said that we want it to be high on the support side and low on the compliance side* [gentle pressure]. *Now, we don't want it to flip, but we do want to be far more intentional, a little support, a little expectation, a little more support, a little bit more expectation ….*

***Principal leadership work for 2008***

Work is already underway to support principals in taking the next step as instructional leaders. For 2007, principals were asked to develop an end of the year goal, but the principals weren't sure what that meant. Some chose such all-encompassing goals that they weren't sure where to start. Others needed more guidance to figure out the appropriate goal for their school given the wide range of understanding of balanced literacy among their staff. District leaders regrouped a few times, re-taught their expectation, and eventually set up one-on-one meetings with principals to establish appropriate goals. Each of the schools had finally identified a goal late in the year, with only one waiver day left to begin to teach the skills needed to accomplish their goal.

That struggle was a sobering lesson for the district leaders. They learned that they had to be much more explicit in modeling what they wanted principals to be able to do. For 2008, their expectation is that principals will develop year-long plans for professional learning targeted toward achieving their building goals. The superintendent explained the new expectations:

> *You need a sequence of professional learning. We are changing our language from professional development to professional learning, because it's not just about professional development, the sit and get, it is about faculty meetings, instructional memos, everything you can harness to use.*

Several sessions were scheduled over the 2007 summer to teach the principals how to put together their plans, how to craft a powerful opening for their four days before school starts that would help them 'ask for the order.' And in the process they want to coach

[20] Connected Mathematics Project

principals in "*strengthening their leadership voice so that it is not a hammer, but it is so compelling and convincing that people just sign on.*" [Administrator C]

The district has put the pieces of the infrastructure in place, but it is still fragile; it will need adjustments and reinforcements to ensure that the structures will survive after the individuals who built it leave. The pace of change has been very fast. The district will have new principals to introduce to the system and two new members of the district leadership team to replace directors who have left to pursue new challenges. Moreover, the leaders will soon have to confront two new hurdles: contract negotiations and board elections.

During the spring (2007) district leaders took steps to begin increasing expectations first for literacy coaches. In order to hire four coaches for mathematics, the district reconfigured the literacy coach position, reducing the number of elementary coaches to six. Each coach will now serve two buildings and be supervised by the assistant superintendent. This will ensure that all of the coaches' time will now be spent coaching and developing their skills, rather than fulfilling a range of other administrative duties (e.g., testing, playground supervision). They have also added a district literacy coach to support teachers and building coaches in the secondary schools.

Similarly, the accountability for teachers is also increasing significantly for the 2007-08 school year. In the coming year teachers will be expected to 'take on' the practices that they 'tried on' during 06-07 as part of their routine practice, while they continue to try on new approaches for word work and shared reading. These new expectations became readily apparent during summer school. The assistant superintendent explained how that unfolded:

> *The very first day of summer school, I said to the consultants, come on, we are going for a walk. You did two days of PD Thursday and Friday, let's go see what we see in classrooms as a result. So the teachers were like, 'you are here on the first day of summer school? The kids aren't even in their seats yet.' So we purposefully did not take notes or write when we were in the classrooms, because that is totally stressful. But what we saw was not much from the two days of PD. So we sat down at lunch with the consultants and said, 'this is a reflection of us. If they are not doing what we want them to do, then that is our fault. We didn't teach them how to do it well or weren't clear about our expectation.' So we decided that we were probably not clear about the expectations. We asked all of the consultants to send us a list of what they would expect to see teachers doing in the classroom as a result of [their] PD. We shared the list with all of the teachers in summer school and told them, this is what we would expect to be seeing. Yesterday, we did another walk. Lo and behold, they were doing what we asked. I asked the principals, have we heard any complaints? What happened when we pushed really hard? Did people quit summer school? Did they say, I am out of here, I didn't sign up for this amount of work?—nothing—the teachers did the work.*

The reform effort in Marysville is still in the beginning stages, but the pace of reform in Marysville is extremely fast and much has been accomplished with very few repercussions. It has been one of the goals of CEL to learn from the difficulties encountered in other districts (for an analysis of the San Diego, California, reform, see for example, Hubbard, Stein, & Mehan, 2006, *Reform as Learning: When school reform collides with school culture and community politics*). Thus far, the district leaders, with support from CEL, have already accomplished a great deal.

## Outcomes

In this era of high-stakes accountability, when one thinks of outcomes, most people think in terms of test scores. WASL[21] scores are certainly a constant concern for Marysville, especially in mathematics, where the district trails significantly behind the state average. It is early for the district's literacy initiative to begin showing an impact on test scores. Results of 2007 WASL testing are not yet available. The scores from 2006 show small gains over the previous years in 4th grade, significant gains in 10th grade, but up and down scores at 7th grade. However, those scores reflect only the first year's investment in literacy. (Washington State only began testing every grade in 2006, so there are no comparable data for earlier years at grades 3, 5, 6, and 8.) Teachers are optimistic that this year's scores will substantiate their observations that, because of the changes in their instructional practice, their students now know more and are able to do more.

**Table 3. Marysville School District**
**Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) Test Results – All Students, District-wide**
*Data reports percentages of students with scores that met state standards.*

| **2005-06 Results** | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Subject** | **3rd Grade** | **4th Grade** | **5th Grade** | **6th Grade** | **7th Grade** | **8th Grade** | **10th Grade** |
| Reading | 64.5% | 78.4% | 72.5% | 57.6% | 54.8% | 65.1% | 78.5% |
| Math | 57.0% | 52.7% | 45.5% | 36.9% | 36.5% | 36.7% | 39.8% |
| Writing | | 54.1% | | | 55.7% | | 69.9% |
| Science | | | 28.0% | | | 34.6% | 25.8% |
| **2004-05 Results** | | | | | | | |
| **Subject** | **3rd Grade** | **4th Grade** | **5th Grade** | **6th Grade** | **7th Grade** | **8th Grade** | **10th Grade** |
| Reading | | 76.5% | | | 63.2% | | 66.4% |

[21] Washington Assessment of Student Learning, Washington's state test.

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Math | | 54.8% | | | 40.5% | | 41.0% |
| Writing | | 50.9% | | | 50.5% | | 49.2% |
| Science | | | 24.0% | | | 34.0% | 24.6% |
| **2003-04 Results** | | | | | | | |
| **Subject** | **3rd Grade** | **4th Grade** | **5th Grade** | **6th Grade** | **7th Grade** | **8th Grade** | **10th Grade** |
| Reading | | 72.8% | | | 51.3% | | 57.8% |
| Math | | 56.5% | | | 38.0% | | 35.6% |
| Writing | | 58.5% | | | 53.2% | | 59.2% |
| Science | | | 20.6% | | | 34.4% | 19.6% |

There are many, if not measurable, certainly visible changes in practice and in the culture of the district as a result of the district's investment in the literacy initiative. As reported earlier, teachers recognize the investment the district has made and feel 'honored' to be part of the training. Because of the quality of the PD, they feel like they are being treated as professionals and given the tools and support to do the job that is asked of them. These sentiments have garnered tremendous support from the teacher association and an increasing percentage of teachers are embracing the work. Those who are not part of their leadership team are inquiring, '*when is it my turn to go*?' Principals report that they no longer have to cajole teachers into going to training:

> *People who really need it and are now asking, "Can I go? I'd like to attend the training. I'd like to do the summer school work."* [Principal B]

> *It has made more teachers into leaders. So, more teachers have risen to help with the staff development, participate in the collegial conversations, read books together, observe their colleagues. A whole another layer of teacher leaders has risen, and everybody has developed their skills.* [Principal C]

Attendance at the instructional practice sessions forced the district to extend the training to two days, one session for elementary and one for secondary, in part to accommodate the numbers and in part to tailor the training to the different needs of secondary schools.

Principals are also excited about their professional learning:

> *I've been in education for thirty years, and it's been energizing just because of the strong direction and I now know much more about instruction.* [Principal D]

There is evidence that the 'habits of thinking' decision-making process is being used by some principals to focus on their building goals, even if it took a while to get there:

> *I did his little DVD thing and said, I don't know how we are going to do this, I don't know what it means, but we are going to be doing this by December. When I figured out what it* [the habits of thinking] *was, then I set the goal for the year. Because then I figured out, what our school needs to do was through readers workshop, because we already figured out that SFA [Success for All] does not have independent reading. And the other piece for me was that classroom teachers didn't know their kids as readers, because they send them off to SFA. So, it was a natural for us to take on independent reading and knowing your own kids as readers.* [Principal E]

District leaders also found that the literacy coaches had done important work in a number of classrooms and that their efforts had produced visible results:

> *We really were pleased with what we saw [during the Big Walks[22]], where there had been coaching work there was evidence of charting, and structures were in place. Then the way that the coach was able to talk about the teachers demonstrated how well they knew them. The buildings that were furthest along, we could see that the coaching work was really connected to building level PD.* [Coach F]

There is also evidence that the district's investment in literacy and in their leaders is increasing expertise within the district. Although district leaders know that they will continue to need input from external experts to build internal capacity, they know that the goal is to 'gradually release' and move toward independence: One district leader summarized their goal:

> *It is about building and sustaining that capacity so much so, that when the original leaders leave, the work stays. So that has always been our goal, to figure out how we grow our own?* [Administrator D]

The district has also been able to gently push the principals to take more leadership in leading the work:

> *With Larry, I look at it and say, I get it now what he is doing. When I see both of them, I know they are modeling for us and I really appreciate that. I need them to model good leadership, and Larry has done it so well. You know that what he is trying to model in his PD to us is what he would expect us to try to do. And what is good about it, he makes mistakes and he is open about it. Then we can move, I can feel the same, okay, if I flub it up, it is going to be okay. Actually you are not flubbing it up, you are learning and that made it okay. The gradual release is when he calls for the order and he says, okay, you will have this. Oh, what happened to the 'we are all learning together'? (Laughs) It's those moments that you catch on.* [Principal E]

[22] At the end of the 2007 school year, the district leadership team decided that a good way to assess the year's progress was to visit every classroom in the district. They quickly rearranged schedules and each morning visited a different school. These full school walk throughs were called "Big Walks," as discussed on page 38.

Our data support the conclusion reached by the superintendent that their success thus far is a result of immersing the district in learning. As he learned from three years of traveling the world and studying what made companies successful, there was never, he finally realized, a magic bullet. It is really more the way they lived:

> *It is a thousand little things that we do, rather than one big thing. Books for classroom libraries, and I think the modeling we do—it lets people know that we put our money where our mouth is and it wasn't all about top-down, just do this.*

The district has tried to incorporate all of Cambourne's conditions for learning to create immersion. The initiative began with the instructional practice training, the triads, the coach training, the walk-throughs, the demonstrations and then talking about it. Rather than one silver bullet, the product is the sum total of all the parts. The superintendent is conducting his own action research, testing his theory that "*if you invest the 50 to 60 hours in a teacher over the course of a year, if it is all aligned, you are going to get results*." They've observed that many of the principals that have participated in summer school were more able to lead the work "*in a knowledgeable, nuanced, personal way because they had been there*." The greatest limitation is finding the time and the resources to do all the work they know lies ahead.

The district is learning to be more intentional about all of their work. They are rethinking how to make the studio classrooms more effective so that consultants can build in a 'to, with and a by,' to enable a gradual release of responsibility. They are looking at building greater consistency between the PD and the studio work for high schools so that the message is truly aligned. They have changed the principal job description to attract people who are invested in instructional leadership. And they moving toward giving teachers and coaches more specific feedback along with opportunities to see accomplished practice.

In 2006-07 the superintendent added the expectation that building leaders would develop communities of practice within their schools; however, they did not develop guidelines or procedures to accomplish that objective. Instead, they continued to arrange collaborative learning experiences that brought different groups together in principal triads, in building leadership teams, in the coach training—all of which has begun generating spontaneous communities of practice.

The principal triads began with an intentional design and in some instances the triads began to meet on their own. Some coaches are meeting informally, developing their own networks—they call and email each other to get information. The restructuring of the coaches' job for 2008, with six district-level coaches and regular meetings every other week, will help to further build a strong community.

It is the additive effect of the quality and scope of support for professional learning that has produced the change in the district's culture. The following incident we heard from the superintendent exemplifies how dramatic that change has been:

> *We did our professional development for summer school on Thursday and Friday and due to 4th of July we didn't have the third day that we usually give to teacher to prepare their classroom. So, without complaining, they asked on Friday afternoon if somebody could open the buildings for them and allow them to set up their classrooms for Monday. We had to deal with our own procedures here, keys, nobody here has a security code, etc. and initially Gail's answer was no. Then Gail said "how will we make this work"? So we opened the buildings until 8 o'clock on Friday night and we had, not all of the teachers, but a majority of them. When I came in May 2004 (after the strike), it was kind of, 'work to the contract.' Now there has been this shift saying, please, may I work for free, at 8 o'clock on Friday night? And then we received 'thank you's' for finding a way to open up the buildings. There are increasing numbers of spontaneous things like that bubbling up.*

We would argue that this kind of example is exactly how Wenger (1998) defines a community of practice:

> *Over time, collective learning results in practices that reflect both the pursuit of our enterprises and the attendant social relations. These practices are thus the property of a kind of community created over time by the sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise.* (p.45)

It's because of those spontaneous communities 'bubbling up' throughout the year that led the superintendent to quietly and cautiously say, with a smile, **"**We might just make it."