

THE WEB

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LEARNING TO GROW TREES: TENACITY, LEADERSHIP, AND SCHOOL REFORM

BY GREG FARRELL

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I consider it the foremost task of education to ensure the survival of these qualities: an enterprising curiosity, an undefeatable spirit, tenacity in pursuit, sensible self-denial, and above all, compassion.

—Kurt Hahn

TENACITY IN PURSUIT

Kurt Hahn founded the Salem Shule in Germany, Gordonstoun School in Scotland, the Atlantic Colleges (and through them the International Baccalaureate), the Duke Of Edinburgh Award Scheme, and Outward Bound. A common set of educational ideas motivated all these schools and programs, established in the 30s, 40s, and 50s, and active today. At Salem and at Gordonstoun, in the Duke of Edinburgh Awards, and in the first Outward Bound courses all students were required to

pursue an individual project of some complexity. “The chief requirement was that it require a sustained effort,” recalls Josh Miner, in his book *Outward Bound USA*.

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Third grader Danny Doran painted this mixed-media watercolor view of Rochester's Upper Falls. Doran attends the Genesee Community Charter School, which is a new K-5 Expeditionary Learning school located at the Rochester Museum and Science Center in Rochester, New York.

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Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound® is a New American Schools design for comprehensive school improvement that challenges K-12 students to meet rigorous academic and character standards. Our model is based on 10 principles that grow out of the experience and philosophy of Outward Bound.®

Learning to Grow Trees, continued from page 1

With respect to working with schools, we have been lucky in our mentors: They have all been models of sustained effort. They include Kurt Hahn; Josh Miner, who brought Outward Bound to the United States and is helping to guide Expeditionary Learning; and Paul Ylvisaker, an inspiring friend, teacher and leader in philanthropy, government and education, who contributed materially to the chain of events that led to Expeditionary Learning's development as a design and program for whole-school change in the '90s.

The most pertinent lesson for me, though, comes from Herb Sturz, who is relatively unknown in school reform circles, except, recently, in after-school education, and who has never been associated with Outward Bound. Sturz was the founder and for 16 years the executive director of the Vera Institute of Justice. In this job, and in many others, he has been responsible for more significant and lasting improvements, more successful reforms in public systems in the United States and abroad—criminal justice, welfare, housing, addiction treatment, national service, employment and training, and now after-school education—than anyone I know. “Tenacity is a kind of intelligence,” he once told me. “Those who care the most, for the longest, win.”

REFORMING SCHOOLS IS LIKE GROWING TREES

With respect to improving schools and student achievement, leadership is not leadership if it is not there for the long haul. School reform, by its nature, requires a sustained effort. It takes more tenacity and time to improve schools than is generally discussed or acknowledged in the press, and it takes longer than our political structures support. The school reform literature and our experience suggest that it takes five to ten years to create schools that bring out the best in their students and teachers. Ideas are important, but they come in a moment. Doing is what counts, and doing takes years. This seems always to

have been especially true of school reform. “If you want to change schools,” one superintendent-reformer told me in 1964, “learn to grow trees.” For school reform to succeed, the leaders and all of us, but especially the leaders, have to hang in there, keep tending the trees.

Leaders have to provide a focus: choose a direction and stick to it. They have to be reliable and doggedly persistent. Trust is built through constancy. Trust and time are requirements for creating or transforming and sustaining good schools. When the schools we work with choose Expeditionary Learning, they are

Ideas are important, but they come in a moment.

Doing is what counts, and doing takes years.

choosing a direction, and our work with them is first to help them pick a few key targets and pursue them. For Angela Jolliffe, Expeditionary Learning's field director for the Southeast, it all boils down to paying attention. “You pay attention to it; you work on it; it gets better.”

The political environment of public education in this country makes it more difficult than it should be for people working in schools and districts to pick a direction and stick to it. School boards have elections every two years, often changing superintendents (and direction) in the process, assuring that no strategy will work because no strategy is actually tried. The average big-city superintendent now stays in the job less than two and a half years, an all-time low. The political rhetoric promises or suggests big, unrealistic improvements in a year or two. Even Comprehensive School Reform grants are available to individual schools for only three years, with no requirement in most states that recipient schools show how they are

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LEARNING BY HEART

By Roland S. Barth
excerpt

In his book *Learning by Heart* (Jossey-Bass, Inc. San Francisco, 2001), Roland S. Barth explores what it takes to reform schools and make it work in the long-term. In the chapter entitled "Teacher Leadership," he writes about a group of teachers, principals, and superintendents who sailed from Rockland, Maine to Gloucester, Massachusetts with an *Outward Bound* crew. In this short excerpt, Barth portrays how the teachers on board the *Bowdoin* took over leadership of the daylong sailing expedition, and then explores what the entire crew learned from that experience.

Teacher Leadership at Sea

... One incontrovertible learning from the day was that you don't have to be or to become a principal or a superintendent in order to influence the course of a vessel—or a school. Indeed, rank in the hierarchy has little relevance when it comes to school-based reform. Reformers are those who know something about the organization, have a vision leading to a better way, can enlist others in that vision, and can mine the gold of everyone's craft knowledge to discover ways to move toward that vision. As Frank McCourt, author of *Angela's Ashes* and a former classroom teacher suggests, "Ask the teachers—for a change. They're on the front lines. Forget the bureaucrats and politicians and statisticians. Ask the teachers. They know the daily drama of the classroom, a drama beyond measurement."

There was another learning from that day on the *Bowdoin*. As part of the assessment of teacher productivity in our profession, the group suggested we should ask, Is the real teacher showing up? Is all of the teacher showing up as it did on the *Bowdoin*, or is much of it left at home each morning? We are all capable of our best and our worst. Teachers who give their best most of the

time offer schools their leadership. It is in teachers' hands, every bit as much as the hands of the school principal, that possibilities of school-based reform reside.

Indeed, assuming leadership to improve the school, like writing about practice, is part of what it means to be a professional. There is no shortage of opportunities in school for the teacher to demonstrate professionalism by leading, a few tough steps at a time, toward improvement.

With increasing frequency these days, teachers are evaluated on the basis of how successful they are in getting their students test scores to rise. Perhaps a more fundamental criterion would be to look at how helpful teachers are as members of the school community in providing leadership that will improve the culture of the school and make it hospitable to everyone's learning. For, as we know, more than anything else it is the culture of the school that determines the achievement of teacher and student alike.

Our day at sea aboard the *Bowdoin* vividly manifests the untapped potential and power of teacher leaders, yet the culture of most schools and school systems provides precious little support for teacher leadership. Indeed, as we have discussed, the teacher who steps in and assumes leadership, who distinguishes himself or herself from others, violates the taboos of many schools and districts.

When teachers' leadership is withheld or rejected, there are incalculable costs to both teacher and school. For without teachers' leadership, all too few vessels get their sails up and their anchor raised, and make it safely to port. And the life of the teacher becomes limited to the classroom—a rich and crucial life, to be sure, but not enough for most teachers and most schools.

GUIDING WITH INTIMACY AND CARING AT AN URBAN ACADEMY

BY SUSAN TIBBELS

“Anyway, I keep picturing all these little kids playing some game in this big field of rye and all. Thousands of little kids, and nobody’s around—nobody big, I mean—except me. And I’m standing on the edge of some crazy cliff. What I have to do, I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff...That’s all I’d do all day. I’d just be the catcher in the rye...that’s the only thing I’d really like to be...”

-Excerpt from *The Catcher in the Rye*
by J.D. Salinger

Looking out the window of my office, located on one of the highest points in west Baltimore City, my spirit resonates with the idea of “standing on the edge of some crazy cliff.”

Earlier this week, in the middle of our day, gunshots rang out in the public housing complex adjacent to our school, New Song Academy. Our first graders were across the street playing in the yard and had to run back to our

building for safety. Shootings and open-air drugs markets are a sad and distressing part of our daily community life. Compounding the crime and violence, many of our students live in homes where they have been poisoned by lead paint dust from old, deteriorating rowhouses and now suffer learning disabilities as a result.

There are plenty of days when our staff would like to be anything other than the “catchers.” We get discouraged and tend to look at the things that we wanted to do but did not have time for, the frustrations, the disappointments, the long way we have to go.

So why do we keep doing it? The answer is rooted in an Expeditionary Learning design principle that is the cornerstone of our school culture, Intimacy and Caring:

Learning is fostered best in small groups where there is trust, sustained caring, and mutual respect among all members of the learning community. Keep schools and learning groups small. Be sure there is a caring adult looking after the progress of each child. Arrange for the older students to mentor the younger ones.

School structures, including implementation of the other design principles, will stand or fall based upon the quality of relationships between staff, parents, and students. At New Song, visitors comment that they can feel love and compassion in the atmosphere the moment they set foot in our door. You begin to

Even in our preschool, our three- and four-year-old children are taught about the design principle Intimacy and Caring. Parents are always surprised to hear their little ones complaining, “He’s not showing Intimacy and Caring because he won’t share!”

develop this kind of atmosphere by defining and modeling for the entire school community what Intimacy and Caring means.

We have followed these practices at New Song Academy and can attest to the fact that they work. We intentionally maintain our small enrollment of 110 students even with a waiting list of over 200. There are only 15 students in a class, so every child and parent is known by name. Many of the parents work here at the school, including our assistant director and parent liaison.

Even in our preschool, our three- and four-year-old children are taught about the design principle Intimacy and Caring. Parents are always surprised to hear their little ones complaining, "He's not showing Intimacy and Caring because he won't share!" It is encouraging to hear parents say they are learning new things from their children.


Our primary school rule is "Treat others the way you want to be treated." This rule supports the concept of Intimacy and Caring and is reflected in our school pledge: *I pledge to show respect to myself, my family, my school, my neighborhood and to all people everywhere; by caring, not hating; showing understanding, not anger; being thoughtful of others, not thinking of myself first; treating everyone as if it were me.* During morning circle, our students are taught why we do not allow name-calling or using the words "shut up." Words can destroy relationships.

This expectation for respect applies not only to the children, but to the adults, as well. We do not believe in yelling, demeaning, or accusing students and that allows us to use a powerful question as an effective behavior management strategy, "I don't disrespect you, so why are you disrespecting me?" This thought-provoking question builds trust, not anger, in students so that they can share the root of their problem that we can then help them resolve. At our Friday morning schoolwide assembly, students and staff are given an opportunity to offer apologies or kudos. Once an apology is made, the slate is wiped clean, and everyone is

given a fresh start. Kudos allow students and staff to be publicly recognized and appreciated. The resulting relationships we establish with students are so meaningful that even after our middle school students graduate, they still return to New Song to share their problems and successes with our staff.

Intimacy and Caring at New Song Academy is not only displayed through words and attitudes, but also through actions.

Again, the adults set the tone with their genuine care and concern for one another. There is rarely a staff meeting where tears of joy or heart-felt concern for the children do not flow. This relational intimacy is perceived by the students and gives them a sense of security. Teachers show Intimacy and Caring by giving students birthday parties, taking them out to lunch, writing encouraging notes, or buying them special treats. Our school is a safe haven in an otherwise harsh environment where children feel free to be children. Laughter fills the hallways and hugs are freely given and returned. But I must admit that even we are amazed when our middle school students link arms or hold hands with us in public when we go out on fieldwork!

A school culture characterized by Intimacy and Caring does not just happen. It requires school structures such as morning circle, compassionate rules, our pledge, posting the Expeditionary Learning Design Principles, intentional staff development and teachers who are dedicated to being "catchers in the rye." Once the school soil is prepared to nurture a culture of Intimacy and Caring, though, the students who are planted there are sure to thrive. 

Susan Tibbels is executive director of New Song Academy in Baltimore, Maryland.

Leaders are best

When people barely know that they exist,
Not so good when people obey and acclaim them;

Worse when they despise them.

"Fail to honor people,
They fail to honor you,"

But of a good leader, their aim fulfilled,
The people will all say, "We did this ourselves."

-Lao Tzu

EARLY EVALUATION: MEASURING, MAKING IMPROVEMENTS, AND TELLING THE STORY

BY STEVEN ROSS

Ian Slothower, a third-grade student at the Genesee Community Charter School in Rochester, New York, did this mixed-media watercolor and colored pencil painting "View of Rochester's Upper Falls" from the Pont de Rennes Bridge for the expedition "Beginnings."

We have invited Steven Ross, professor at the Center for Research in Educational Policy at The University of Memphis in Tennessee, to write an article based on his presentation on external evaluation at the Expeditionary Learning National Conference held in Denver last spring. Ross is one of the country's foremost authorities on Comprehensive School Review. In this article, Ross argues for the need for Expeditionary Learning schools to consider using third-party formative evaluations to gain insight into their reform efforts. The results of such evaluations, Ross writes, make it easier for school leaders to

present a case to the public on the importance of continuing the reform work. For school communities, such third-party evaluations present useful data to support the Expeditionary Learning school review process and the annual implementation check that Expeditionary Learning conducts with schools.

Time and again, educators search for the most effective programs or school reform models and enthusiastically put them into place. Unfortunately, they often miss one of the most fundamental parts of the process: an ongoing, early, and external evaluation that assesses how well the designs and programs are being implemented, what is working or not working, and what needs to be improved for the next year. Is it any surprise that reform efforts often come and go with only sporadic sustained success?

In the field of education, we use two forms of evaluation—summative and formative. *Summative* evaluations judge final performance and, on that basis, help to determine rewards, sanctions, and future direction. When assessing Comprehensive School Reform programs such as Expeditionary Learning, summative



evaluations look back and ask, “How did the program do?” Results are then used to guide decisions about whether the program should be expanded, maintained, or discontinued.

Formative evaluations, conducted in the early stages of a new model, focus on how a school reform model is practiced and its early impact on the school community. These evaluations are aimed at monitoring and improving programs, asking questions like, “How is the program doing?” and “How can the school better use the program to achieve goals?” Formative evaluations consider key outcomes such as implementation progress, school climate, classroom teaching and learning activities, and teacher buy-in. The data uncovered from formative evaluations can provide helpful guidance that will improve implementation of school reform models. With this information, school leaders can begin to relate rich stories about their school beyond the one about “student achievement.”

THE CASE FOR EXTERNAL EVALUATIONS

I hope the assumptions and suggestions regarding third-party program evaluation proposed in this article will provoke and stimulate thought, discussion, and action. Clearly, we are in an era where policy makers, districts, and schools scrutinize Comprehensive School Reform models such as Expeditionary Learning. All want to know whether the designs can deliver what they promise. First, I will outline some basic assumptions for school communities to think about.

~ Comprehensive School Reform designs *themselves* do not raise student achievement. Designs such as Expeditionary Learning, however, that foster improvements in teaching effectiveness and school climate can raise student achievement. But *adopting* a model such as Expeditionary Learning only means acquiring the potential to effect positive change. In order to

engender school reform, schools must implement the design fully, and it takes several years to improve teaching and school climate substantively. Therefore, it is not reasonable to expect measurable achievement gains in the first three to five years of a new program.

~ Although some designs like Expeditionary Learning give regular feedback to schools in the form of implementation checks, little or no third-party evaluation is currently performed in schools. This type of evaluation helps determine whether (a) school reform models are being implemented well; (b) teachers have the professional development, resources, and motivation (buy-in) needed to use model strategies; and (c) the necessary changes are being made to improve teaching, climate, and ultimately, student achievement. Evaluation is given high priority in virtually all other fields before new products or services are made available to consumers, but it is usually given little attention or funding by districts and schools. If evaluation is done at all, it will be under mandate, as an afterthought, or as a small, insufficient piece of the school reform initiative. Individual schools must seize the initiative themselves or a useful evaluation probably will not get done.

~ Without formative, school-level evaluation, the student achievement story will be the only one available to tell and this story might take three to five years to produce a “happy ending.” And, if student

In order to succeed in the eyes of the public, school leaders must learn to tell rich stories about the success of reform efforts. These might include outcomes such as impact on school climate, instruction, and what students are learning in the classroom.

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achievement has not yet been demonstrably impacted, the story may not support the school reform model. In order to succeed in the eyes of the public, school leaders must learn to tell rich stories about the success of reform efforts. These might include outcomes such as impact on school climate, instruction, and what students are learning in the classroom. Through the stories, others can learn about the positive changes that are happening in the school as a result of the design. Without the background knowledge necessary for school leaders to tell their own story, the story will be told for them by someone else, such as a local newspaper reporter. The latter storytellers rarely understand the difficulty and length of time that it takes to implement a reform initiative. Those storytellers tend to make their tale one of success or failure based on short-term student achievement gains as measured by standardized tests, which are often reported to the public with no consideration to student mobility and other complicating factors.

- ~ Schools need help in conducting evaluations. First, the school staff is likely to already be heavily burdened by implementing the school reform model. Second, the staff is unlikely to have the expertise and resources to conduct a high-quality evaluation. Third, an evaluation report written by a qualified third party is likely to have much more credibility both for internal use and for external “story telling.”
- ~ For evaluations to help improve the implementation of a design, data must be shared among the school community, interpreted reflectively, and directly used to set goals and strategies for program improvement. In the process of openly

Leaders at Expeditionary Learning schools tell stories with the information, for example, about how the school is using much more engaging and active learning than was used in the past.

examining and discussing results, teachers are likely to feel greater ownership of the school reform program. Unless teachers feel ownership of and buy-in to a design, the reform effort will probably not last long after the departure of the school leaders who brought the model to the school.

FORMATIVE EVALUATION PROCESS FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT (FEPSI)

The assumptions above create a compelling rationale for making third-party formative evaluation a fundamental part of the Comprehensive School Reform process at the individual school level. But school leaders understandably have concerns about time and cost. In recognition of these issues, much of my recent work at the Center for Research in Educational Policy (CREP) at The University of Memphis has concentrated on developing a practical and affordable evaluation package to help schools assess their Comprehensive School Reform program.

The package includes up to six “ready to use” instruments to collect data. Typically, to increase validity and objectivity, it is best to have outside help in collecting data (such as retired teachers, district staff, volunteers, university faculty or graduate students). Such help will probably cost less than \$500 for the year.

These instruments include the Benchmarking Process, School Observation Measure, School Climate Inventory, Comprehensive School Reform Teacher Questionnaire, Survey of Computer Use, and Extended Rubrics. CREP staff members scan, analyze and interpret these data and then write a final report, including recommendations to the school. This provides an external unbiased review of the school reform initiative under evaluation as well as a planning guide that will help the school community interpret and use the data to continue to monitor progress, make improvements, and tell the school's story. (For more information on FEPSI, visit the New American Schools website, www.naschools.org/respub/tools.phtml, and download Ross' publication "How to evaluate Comprehensive School Reform Models.")


PARTING ADVICE

By using the types of evaluation data illustrated above, school staffs can become more knowledgeable of and accountable for the success of their school reform effort. As emphasized throughout this column, an additional important product is the documentation of accomplishments in a "final report" to show dividends of the school reform model separate from student achievement gains. Leaders at Expeditionary Learning schools tell stories with the information, for example, about how the school is using much more engaging and active learning than was used in the past. They might show that, because of improved school climate, discipline problems no longer interfere with teaching and learning; or that teacher and parent satisfaction with the school has steadily increased to a high level since the adoption of Expeditionary Learning.

For schools that are not yet fully engaged in using formative evaluation, I suggest as "parting advice" the following steps:

1 ~ Make formative evaluation a formal part of your budget. Comprehensive systems like FEPSI are likely to cost about \$2,000 to

\$3,000 per year.

- 2 ~ Identify a third party evaluator (a university or for-profit center) to provide instrumentation and write a report. The advantages of expertise and objectivity far outweigh the additional cost.
- 3 ~ Involve teachers and staff in discussion and design of the evaluation. Develop a culture where evaluation is seen as helpful and necessary for success.
- 4 ~ Start the evaluation activity with a benchmarking-type process. The value is involving veteran and new staff in reflecting about the Comprehensive School Reform design and ensuring that strategies are consonant with current school goals and district policies. Expeditionary Learning's published benchmarks provide a useful tool to measure progress and set goals.
- 5 ~ Share findings of the evaluation report with all stakeholders. Utilize the report to plan for the upcoming year and beyond. Involve all stakeholders in the school's plans and keep them aware of the progress and successes.
- 6 ~ Make the data-driven continuous improvement process a standard part of the Comprehensive School Reform each year.
- 7 ~ Use the results to tell your story to the school staff, parents and community members, the district, the newspaper, the Expeditionary Learning community, and anyone else who will listen. 

Steven Ross is a professor at The University of Memphis in Memphis, Tennessee.

Patrick McConeghy, a first grader at the Genesee Community Charter School in Rochester, New York, sketched this self-portrait for the expedition "Stories about Myself."



Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of the universe. Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We were born to make manifest the glory that is within us. It's not just in some of us, it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

-Nelson Mandela

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going to finance and continue ongoing work in years four, five, six and beyond. This reinforces the idea that reform is a three-year project that will go away when the grant funds do. So it takes an uncommon amount of perseverance to keep on doing what needs to be done long enough for it to make a difference.

Not all countries are organized this way. In Scotland, and Denmark, and Japan, for example—whose students regularly score well above the United States in international tests—public school leaders

at the district level and all levels are encouraged to stay at the task, and do, for 15 to 20 years or more. These countries, and others, apparently retain a sense of urgency about improving things now without sacrificing constancy in leadership and the pursuit of a long-term plan.

SCHOOLS AT THE CENTER

I am more and more certain that improving individual schools, school-by-school, should be the central strategy that all other strategies support. If school reform does not actually happen at the individual school level, it does not happen. “In the long term, I have no faith in the authority of anyone over the level of principal,” said Bob Slavin, head of Success for All/Roots and Wings, the largest and one of the most successful comprehensive reform organizations. The social architecture of the school has to be built by the people in the school, led usually by the principal. And it takes time.

Continuity in leadership affords school leaders the opportunity to build a faculty

team that inspires and supports the school's vision for change. States and districts vary as to how much authority they allow individual schools in hiring teachers or letting them go. The successful school leadership teams, however, recruit and hire teachers they think will help improve the school and weed out those they think will not. “It's amazing how much you can get done when you get rid of the right people,” one very effective principal wrote.

In Expeditionary Learning's experience, the more autonomous the school, the more likely it is to implement and practice our design successfully and improve. The more the school has developed its own vision and culture, the more of its budget it is in charge of, the more it controls its schedule and its program of professional development, the better the prospects for its using our assistance well. This happens more naturally with charter schools, but there are enough heartening examples of relatively autonomous regular public schools in our network to indicate it can be done. In almost every case the building leadership decided to move in a certain direction, stuck with it, showed progress in student achievement, thus developed credibil-

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ity with the district, making it possible to guard the school's relative autonomy.

"You rarely see a school get out very far ahead of its principal," said John Bennion, a school reform leader in Utah and a New American Schools adviser, and he is right. The single best predictor of success Expeditionary Learning has found in working with and helping a school improve is a good principal who understands and wants to use Expeditionary Learning, and stays at it for five years or more. In Outward Bound the idea is to bring out the leader in everyone. Good principals, like good Outward Bound instructors, structure things so the leadership team and everyone in the school takes responsibility for moving the school forward. The leadership gurus call this transformational leadership, meaning that it motivates and changes people, and helps them bridge the commitment gap.

It follows that good principals are a precious resource. I am certain they are not generally treated as though they were. Many of the principals and teachers who lead the change effort in our schools feel "jerked around" by the system. Sometimes they *are* jerked around. At least two of the best principals we have worked with, both making great progress implementing Expeditionary Learning and raising student achievement in their schools, were moved by their districts to other schools, without consultation, one of them in the middle of the year. This would not happen in a district with a school-centered reform strategy.

It is important for the federal and state departments of education and local school districts to think of the schools as the center of the effort and take opportunities to move in the direction of support of schools and away from control of schools. Some districts have come quite far along this line. Diana Lam, the reform-minded superintendent of the Providence, Rhode Island schools said, "a central office should, first and foremost, have an orientation toward service. And

if that orientation doesn't exist, then really, why is there a central office?"

All of us who are interested in school reform should be finding, keeping, and encouraging the best principals and other building-level leaders. I am certain Expeditionary Learning can be more attentive to this as a design and as a professional development and technical assistance partner. We have a much more focused and well thought through program of assistance to schools now than we did when we began working with schools in 1993-94. I know from recent meetings with our New American Schools col-

Never measure the height of a mountain, until you have reached the top. Then you will see how low it was.

-Dag Hammarskjold
Markings

Second-grade student Ryan O'Malley did this observational line drawing of an interior room on the campus of the Rochester Museum and Science Center where his school, the Genesee Community Charter School, is located.





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leagues that virtually all of the other design and technical assistance organizations would say the same. It took some time, but we all stuck to our guns and got better.

Expeditionary Learning will continue to get better, and one dimension we can improve is our support to principals and other building leaders. We had a retreat this past summer with a group of our most effective principals and came out of it with a good list of things we can do to improve our support of school leaders. They include, among other things: (1) being more explicit about the skills and competencies that are required of an Expeditionary Learning principal, and clearer about our plan to teach them; (2) engaging veteran Expeditionary Learning principals to mentor and coach new principals and principals new to Expeditionary Learning; (3) doing more regional programming for principals and leader-

ship teams; and (4) actively helping schools and districts recruit principals for Expeditionary Learning schools.

Expeditionary Learning is thinking through how we can contribute to sustaining reform and ongoing leadership over the long term. Given the changeability of the political landscape, it seems, sometimes an outsider organization, as we almost always are, can provide a needed measure of continuity, material help to the insiders in picking a direction and sticking to it. Remember what Herb Sturz said: “Tenacity is a kind of intelligence. Those who care the most, for the longest, win.” 

Greg Farrell is the president of Expeditionary Learning. The content of this article will appear in a chapter of the forthcoming book, Leadership for School Reform: Lessons from Comprehensive School Designs, to be edited by Amanda Datnow and Joseph Murphy and published by Corwin Press.