



PSI Net

Project for School Innovation Newsletter

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Greetings and welcome back to school!



The theme of this issue is LEADERSHIP. As educators, each of you has the potential to exercise leadership. Whether you are inspiring students, supporting your colleagues, or guiding your faculty towards the overarching goal of high quality education for all students - you are the most important group of leaders our country has today. At PSI, we recognize that school leadership is about realizing your vision, but also about giving voice to the educators and students around you. Effective leadership is difficult, it is essential, and can be incredibly rewarding.

In this fall issue of PSI Net, we present a few profiles of effective school leadership. Irene Hannigan, an alumna of our Support Network for Innovative Principals, describes her use of writing as a tool for developing reflective leadership. Holly Concannon and Angel Petrie, PSI Associates and teachers from the Murphy School, share in an interview their insights on teacher leadership, including school-wide practices that foster leadership in all teachers.

In addition, we share news both from PSI and from our growing network of educators and Model Schools. We welcome a new intern, Kate Tarca, to PSI; and are launching programs and initiatives that will continue helping you to teach, to share, and to lead at your respective schools and organizations.

Leadership means you are constantly learning and growing as you guide others to do the same. Lead to learn, learn to lead!

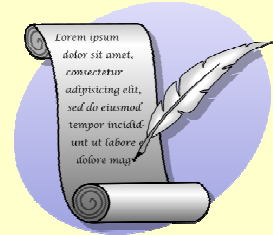
Thank you for leading us into a great school year -

Ruth Feldman,

Executive Director, PSI

Writing - Not Just for Students, by Irene Hannigan

School Principals today face challenges that are unparalleled in their scope, demand, and intensity. They must be willing and able to raise every student to a high level of achievement. They must be organizationally wise, instructionally strong, culturally proficient, and able to embrace rapid technological and global change. It is to meet these challenges that PSI coordinates our Support Network for Innovative Principals (SNIP) - which since 2002 has assembled cohorts of public school leaders to support one another through the ethical, moral, and personal struggles of being a principal.



Through SNIP, principals have the opportunity to self-reflect on their leadership within a non-evaluative space designed solely for that purpose, while surrounded by colleagues who share and understand the issues that they face. For this issue of PSI Net, we asked Irene Hannigan, who participated in our 2006-07 SNIP Lowell Cohort, to share a practice of self-reflection that informs her leadership both on a personal level and throughout her school. She chose to speak about writing.

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I am a principal who not only likes to write but *needs* to write in order to do my job. I use writing to help me think through and reflect on challenging situations as well as to validate and celebrate the work of my staff. Because writing helps me it is also my goal to inspire my staff to see its potential.

During my first three years as principal I wrote in my journal once a week, without fail, never knowing where my pen would take me. Sometimes I reflected on pressing problems. Other times I took great joy in capturing humorous moments and unexpected surprises. I wrote down questions to consider. I made lists of things to do.

Whatever the path my writing took, I was always amazed at how useful this was. Writing helped me to clarify and organize my thoughts and it strengthened my resolve that I could, indeed, do this work.

Eight years into the job, I continue to use writing as a tool to reflect on my practice. I often jot down useful ideas that occur to me after meeting with teachers, students or parents. I publish a weekly newsletter for my staff, designed to help us stay focused on our collective responsibilities for student learning. After I walk through

classrooms I write or email my staff a brief note that may serve as a springboard for further discussion. Every September I write a letter to myself outlining my goals and expectations for the upcoming year. I look back and reflect on this in the spring. In June I muse about the tasks I intend to accomplish during the summer. Writing is a means of communication, but it is also an aid to clear thinking and a means of taking stock.

Every now and then I have discovered that some of my musings actually have the potential of becoming more polished pieces of writing about my staff and the work we do. Three years ago a succession of entries turned into an article celebrating the leadership capacity of my staff. Others turned into an article about the manner in which our cafeteria has evolved into a kind of classroom for learning.

I have also encouraged staff members to write. In September they write letters to themselves outlining their hopes for the upcoming year. They place their letters in sealed envelopes, addressed to themselves, and I tuck them away in a safe spot until June. Teachers write letters to their students to welcome them back to school and newsletters to their families during the course of the school year. Writing also plays an important role in our study groups. We begin each meeting by sharing our reflections of the last meeting. This ensures engagement and encourages everyone's participation.

We have a "Quotes and Quips" notebook, a collection of 4x6 note cards, inserted into a small photograph album, which captures overheard conversations or funny encounters we have had with students. We also have a small but dedicated writing group that has been meeting together for the last two years. Most of the writing we do is first-draft journal writing and can be either about our work or about personal topics of interest. We also have a collection of short articles posted on our website. These are written especially for parents

In short, writing is not only a skill to be taught to students. It is a powerful tool for educators to make use of as well.

Irene Hannigan is the Principal at South Row Elementary School in Chelmsford. To visit South Row online, please click [here](#).

Teacher Leadership at the Richard J. Murphy School

At the Richard J. Murphy School in Dorchester, "leadership" extends beyond the principal's office, and teachers have a significant voice in every aspect of the building's operation. Thanks to a highly collaborative, constantly evolving structure - as well as its consistent



success with a diverse student population - the Murphy has been recognized with multiple awards, while its principal, Mary Russo, was named Massachusetts Elementary Principal of the Year in 2004. PSI sat down with Angel Petrie and Holly Concannon - both classroom math teachers at the Murphy and previous PSI peer coaches - to discuss the topic of "teacher leadership." Ms. Petrie recently returned from Dubai, where she consulted on the development of national math standards; Ms. Concannon is a recipient of the 2004 Milken Massachusetts Educator of the Year Award.

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PSI: *How do you, as classroom teachers at the Murphy, see yourselves as leaders?*

Holly Concannon: We are considered leaders by ourselves and by our peers in the way we support other teachers - both new teachers and veteran teachers. I'm the facilitator of the instructional leadership team and Angel facilitates the math leadership team. The people who attend those meetings are grade-level representatives, so we have teachers facilitating the meeting, teachers attending the meeting, and then those teachers go back to their grade level teams and facilitate that same work with their grade level. Although we may be considered leaders, we work with groups of teachers who are considered leaders [themselves].

Angel Petrie: I want to expound on that just a little bit. I think the fact that we work in teams facilitates a lot of teacher leadership, because you have the opportunity to take on a leadership role that you're comfortable with. For example, if you're not comfortable facilitating, you might be someone who's willing to volunteer to take on the role of the note taker at your grade level team meetings. There are all these levels of leadership so that there's an entry point for everyone who's willing to do it. It's shared leadership.

PSI: *What steps might be taken by other schools who*

want to foster a similar culture of leadership?

AP: As a first step, get to know one another. I would start with building strong teams and figuring out what strengths everyone brings to the table. There also have to be opportunities - real, not artificial leadership opportunities - created by the principal for teachers to have voice and some sort of power in the decision making process. Often when principals identify areas of professional development, they look outside the building to see what outside expertise they can bring in. Our principal starts by looking inside and asks, 'what talent do we have here in the building that we can use for professional development?' Teachers have always facilitated our contractual professional development, which I think is pretty incredible.

HC: [Another point] is to recognize each person's level of comfort. Our principal [Mary Russo] has put people in a position to question whether or not they could handle the leadership, but she always has that safety net ready to make you feel confident. Speaking for myself, I was nervous when I started to facilitate the instructional leadership team. But she made sure I was ready; supported me and made me feel that I was confident. And once I felt confident I was more able to take on other roles. Recognizing each person's level of comfort and building on that is very important, because if people aren't comfortable and confident, they won't be successful, and won't be likely to take on another leadership role.

PSI: *Can you give an example of how you encourage teacher leadership [at the Murphy]?*

HC: A lot of our practice is based on [in-house] data. By looking at the data we have recognized from teachers certain strengths in certain areas. By addressing a particular teacher and asking them what they do well and how they do it, that's empowering right there, plus it motivates that teacher to share their practices with other teachers.

AP: I would just add, it's about really giving teachers a voice, and having it mean something, and be important. And asking. Because if you want to know what teachers think, they'll tell you.

PSI: *What advice would you give to a teacher who wants to be a leader, but isn't sure how?*

AP: Professionally develop yourself as much as possible. Really listen and take in everything that's going on around you. You don't have to have taught for 10 years to have something important to say.

HC: I would also encourage both new and veteran

teachers to take risks and be as actively engaged in everything as possible - in professional development, in team meetings - because the more you take part the more you learn and the more you have to offer.

AP: I think, as a teacher leader, you [have to be] transparent. I work with several new teachers, and it helps to see something as a model from the inside out.

HC: I think that's a really important point about being transparent. We do a million things without realizing we're doing a million things, so to take time and state what you're doing, and why, is pretty powerful. Also, I always appreciate questions because things become second nature, you just work through things. But when people ask, it makes me reflect, it makes me ask why I do what I do. When teachers ask me questions it really puts me in a position to reflect on my own practice, and improve.

*To learn more about the Murphy's teacher leadership practices, detailed in PSI's publication **Building Professional Learning Communities**, please visit our [website](#).*

To visit the Murphy online, please click [here](#).

NEWS AND EVENTS from PSI

Learning Exchange February 9th - SAVE THE DATE!!

PSI's 2nd annual Learning Exchange conference will take place Saturday, February 9th. We hope that you will join us for presentations by fellow teachers about successful, real-world practices; action planning for classroom implementation (PDP's available); and Open Space discussion groups on topics of your choice. Stay tuned for registration information!

PSI a Social Innovation Forum Finalist!

PSI has been named one of the five finalists, out of 30 applicants, for the 2008 Social Innovation Forum's "Social Enterprise: Nonprofit Business Ventures" track. PSI is honored to be listed alongside so many outstanding organizations, and we hope to work with Social Innovation Forum in the year ahead to better achieve our mission of *transforming education by sharing success*.

Support Network for Innovate Principals - PSI Launches 2007-08 Cohort

PSI's Support Network for Innovative Principals (SNIP) program enters its sixth year with a cohort of public school leaders from district, charter, pilot, and exam schools from the greater Boston area. The group will meet monthly in Malden to discuss essential issues facing school leaders, share challenges and successes, and help one another to grow professionally and personally within a rigorous yet supportive environment. For more information about the

SNIP program, please click [here](#).

At-Risk Consortium Dissemination & Tools

PSI's At-Risk High School Consortium - involving principals from Boston Day and Evening Academy, Lowell Middlesex Academy, Champion Charter Public, and Academy of Strategic Learning, as well as Dr. Mike Nakkula from Harvard University - presented to both the Massachusetts Department of Education and Boston Public Schools alternative education networks. Their



presentation, entitled "Counting What Counts: Assessments that Matter for At-Risk Students," addressed the impact of "second chance" schools on the attitudes and accomplishments of their students. The consortium reported on their development of alternative, original metrics in measuring the success of students "at-risk" of dropping out of high school. The consortium's work has been funded by the Mass. DOE. To learn more about the consortium's research findings, or to download the student survey tool and administrator's guide, please click [here](#).

Model School "News from the Network"

- Kevin Andrews, Neighborhood House Charter School Headmaster and PSI Co-Founder, participated in the prestigious [Barr Foundation Fellowship Program](#) for urban leaders this past year, which included a trip to South Africa.
- Vera Johnson of the Ellis Mendel Elementary (and a SNIP alumna) was named a [Schott Principal Fellow](#) by Boston Public Schools for the 2007-08 year.
- City on a Hill Charter School has moved in to its [new Boston location](#) at 58 Circuit Street.
- Academy of the Pacific Rim recently sent faculty members to China for a summer [exchange program](#).
- The Patrick O'Hearn Elementary continues to develop its [full inclusion K-8 pathway](#) with The Harbor School, which will eventually become a K-12 pathway.

PSI Publications

Portraying Identity Through Art. PSI celebrated the publication of *Portraying Identity Through Art* with a book launch and celebration of student artwork October 15th at The Harbor School in Dorchester. This book - the fourth in PSI's "Wisdom of Educators" series - is a source book developed by real classroom teachers featuring case studies from their experience,



accompanied by practical, proven strategies for middle-grade visual arts instruction. In 2005-2006, five middle school visual arts teachers from Boston area public schools participated in PSI's Support Network for Innovative Classrooms. The teachers met monthly to collaboratively review, research, and apply new methods of teaching students to express their identity through art. This book illuminates those methods, and illustrates how art can enhance students' overall academic learning and knowledge of themselves. For more information, including how to order this publication, please click [here](#).

Staff Update

Kate Tarca is a master's candidate at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and the fall Intern at PSI. Prior to joining PSI, Kate taught in the Atlanta Public Schools and was a founding charter school teacher in Washington, DC. She has coached new teachers through Teach For America for three years, and will be working to strengthen the training curriculum for PSI Associates.

Aida Carlo interned with PSI over the summer, and is a current 12th grader at Tech Boston Academy. She joined PSI through the Boston Private Industry Council High School Internship Program, and is looking forward to attending Johnson & Whales University for a degree in culinary arts after her graduation from Tech Boston. While at PSI, Aida streamlined the office data management system and assisted with book sales.

Quotes of Note

*For this edition, we asked teachers and principals: **What is your leadership goal for the coming year?***

"Create a half hour daily tutorial/enrichment time, during the school day, for students at each grade level as part of our Professional Learning Communities Initiative."

"Increase parental involvement in the schools, especially in

the upper grades where it is often lacking."

"Learn how to better balance challenge and support when executing professional development with my colleagues."

"Make sure my students understand that leadership involves more than being loud and stealing the spotlight. I want them to leave for college knowing that being an 'encourager' is as important as being an 'idea generator,' and being the person who gathers the materials needed for the job is as important as being the person who delegates tasks."

"Our mission for this year is to learn as much as we can about Special Education, so that we might make some intelligent adjustments in teacher training, team-teaching models, case management processes, and IEP quality. Our goal is to shift the focus from weaknesses to strengths, and to align our resources and curriculum accordingly."

"Stand on someone's shoulders. You can travel farther carried on the accomplishments of those who came before you. And the view is much better." (From *An Incomplete Manifesto for Growth*, by Bruce Mau)

"Increase awareness among parents of how important it is to be an active player in their child's education and the benefits that their children will get with their involvement."

"Delegate more tasks to committee members (with less micro-managing) to maintain a balance between my job in the classroom and my job as a school leader."

"To influence a culture that balances interventions and remediation for struggling learners. I would like to see a better understanding of the hidden disabilities, so that these 'misunderstood minds' can receive support and experience some success."

"As a team facilitator, I will make sure that everyone participates fully, listens to understand, and reaches agreement to meet the needs of children with special needs."

**Your Online Searching and Shopping can Help Support
PSI**

Helping PSI to transform education is only one

click away -

Here are two simple ways to help support PSI's mission of transforming education by sharing success through your everyday, online activity. Both sites are free to use, and allow you to indirectly donate to PSI.

GOOD SEARCH (www.goodsearch.com) There is a new and easy way to raise money for PSI just by searching the Internet with GoodSearch.com.

It's simple. You use GoodSearch.com like any other search engine - the site is powered by Yahoo! - but each time you do, money is generated for PSI.

Last year, search engines generated close to \$6 billion in revenue from advertisers. With GoodSearch, part of this advertising revenue will now be directed to PSI.

We hope that not only will you use GoodSearch as your main search engine from here on out, but will also pass this message on to your friends and family. The more people who use this, the more money will go to PSI.

DO GREAT STUFF (www.dogreatstuff.com) Another easy way to raise money for PSI is by completing online purchases through many major merchants at DoGreatStuff.com.

With your help, it's really quite simple. Online merchants are willing to pay commissions to sites that bring them customers, because they really want your business. Merchants will know that you have come to them through Do Great Stuff and pay commissions to Do Great Stuff when you buy. Do Great Stuff uses those commissions to make it possible for you to support a cause you care about. You still get access to all the merchant's great offers, free shipping programs or any other specials.

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