



Can Districts Help Schools Improve? Three-Year Study Clarifies District Role

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A new WestEd study found three critical factors determining how district administrators can help -- rather than hinder -- their schools' improvement efforts.

PR9.NET August 10, 2006 - San Francisco - A new WestEd book offers practical advice for districts engaged in continuous school improvement. Building on a three-year study, the authors have created a district action guide with concrete activities designed to help district personnel understand whether they are on track to help -- and not hinder -- their local schools' efforts to raise student achievement.

WestEd researchers concluded that leaders in successful districts:

- * align their efforts to a shared theory about how to achieve school improvement;
- * engage in frequent, open communication and establish a common vocabulary with each other and their schools; and
- * maintain focus in the face of external demands and distractions.

"We provide technical assistance to central office administrators in implementing this inquiry process, and we see firsthand how urgently schools need district support to close persistent achievement gaps," says Kim Agullard, Program Associate in WestEd's Comprehensive School Assistance Program.

Coauthor Dolores Goughnour adds, "The good news? If district leaders take a coherent, consistent, research-based approach in both their improvement-related communications and their improvement structures, then they will foster school improvement."

The action guide, */Central Office Inquiry: Assessing Organization, Roles, and Actions to Support School Improvement/*, examines the critical roles of the superintendent and the governing board, along with the local and national contexts in which districts are enveloped. The activities are designed to engage district and school staff in developing a cohesive, supportive theory of action for school improvement.

More information can be found at www.WestEd.org/centralofficeinquiry.

/Central Office Inquiry: Assessing Organization, Roles, and Actions to Support School Improvement/

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About WestEd

WestEd, a national nonprofit research, development, and service agency, works with education and other communities to promote excellence, achieve equity, and improve learning for children, youth, and adults. WestEd has 16 offices nationwide, from Washington and Boston to Arizona and California. Its corporate headquarters are in San Francisco. More information about WestEd is available at WestEd.org.

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