

EDUCATION WEEK

SPOTLIGHT

On School and District Leadership

EDITOR'S
NOTE

There is a need for proven leaders in American education, both at the school and district levels. These leaders are experimenting with new policies and procedures that are helping to reshape schools. In this Spotlight, see how some districts build and develop the talent of leaders from nontraditional backgrounds; understand how principal and superintendent turnover is changing the way leaders are selected and evaluated; examine districts that are changing their school governance model to incorporate charters; and hear from leaders who are using innovative practices in STEM and social networking.

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Fast-Growing Group Widens Talent Pool for Education Leaders

7,000 apply for management fellowships

By Katie Ash

Applications to Education Pioneers, a nonprofit group that brings high-performing leaders—particularly those from outside education—into K-12 administrative internships, are rising steadily, putting the 10-year-old organization

Kaleah Williams, a fellow with Education Pioneers, stands on the campus of the University of Virginia, in Charlottesville, where she is working with a K-12 school turnaround program. Ms. Williams hopes to one day open a residential school for foster children.



Norm Shafer for Education Week

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in line to follow in the footsteps of other non-traditional talent recruiters such as Teach For America.

Despite that recent growth, however, Education Pioneers remains under the radar of many education leadership and management experts and organizations.

“[Education Pioneers] is able to leverage the huge benefits of cohort-building and human-capital and people pipelines, and they’re getting smart, interesting, engaged people into these roles,” said Frederick M. Hess, the director of education policy studies for the American Enterprise Institute, a Washington think tank.

“The fact that they’re off the radar is one of the key reasons why school improvement is having such enormous difficulties,” added Mr. Hess, who also writes an opinion blog hosted on *Education Week’s* website.

The Oakland, Calif.-based organization experienced a 70 percent increase in applications this past year alone. For the 450 fellowships available for 2013-14, the group received almost 7,000 applications.

The influx of applications has allowed Education Pioneers to become more selective, admitting fewer than 10 percent of those who apply.

The organization’s goal is to build a network of 10,000 alumni by 2023, said Scott Morgan, its founder and chief executive officer.

Positions in Between

Education Pioneers places early-career professionals in paid noninstructional leadership and management internships—such as administrative, analytic, and operational positions—in a variety of education-related organizations, such as charter schools, educational technology companies, school districts, and support organizations. The average fellow comes with about five years of professional experience.

“Between the superintendent and the principal, there are a lot of people that are managing the finance and operations and human resources and professional development,” said Julie Angilly, the vice president of external relations for Education Pioneers. “Those are roles that most people in the general public don’t even know exist, but are just so critical to supporting teachers and successfully educating students.” The organization has three different programs: a 10-week or yearlong internship for graduate students who are either finishing up their degrees or have recently graduated, and a 10-month-long analyst fellowship for those with a strong background in analytics, Ms. Angilly said.

The fellows complete a two-day training session introducing them to some of the big-picture challenges in education, plus five full-day

workshops with their cohort to focus on such topics as education technology or human capital in education. They also receive one-on-one coaching throughout the program to evaluate their progress.

Seventy percent of fellows continue to work in education-related jobs after finishing the program, a recent survey indicates.

Education Pioneers works primarily in urban areas in order to have the biggest impact on underserved communities, said Ms. Angilly, and when it comes to placing fellows in schools, the distribution is split fairly evenly between charter and district-run schools.

The organization is supported through a combination of philanthropic funds and revenue from the partner organizations, which pay to have fellows placed with them. Some of the major funders include the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation, the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Robertson Foundation, and the Walton Family Foundation. (The Gates and Walton foundations also provide grant support for *Education Week*.)

Creating a Pipeline

The inspiration for Education Pioneers came from Mr. Morgan’s experience consulting with the Aspire Public Schools charter network. Then a fledgling organization, Aspire has since grown to encompass 37 schools serving low-income communities in California and Memphis, Tenn.

Mr. Morgan said that at Aspire he saw firsthand the potential that could be realized when leaders from education and business backgrounds were brought together.

“Across the leadership team, [Aspire] had people with these different backgrounds and skill sets all focused on a common mission and vision around providing students with an excellent education,” he said.

Mr. Morgan piloted Education Pioneers with nine fellows from a variety of backgrounds in 2004. Today, the organization boasts an alumni network of more than 2,000 people and works with education organizations in 20 cities.

Of the fellows who stay in education, 40 percent work in either school districts or charter school organizations, and 32 percent work in education support organizations, ranging from ed-tech companies to foundations to think tanks. The rest work in a mix of policy, legal, and advocacy organizations, consulting firms, government education agencies, and out-of-school service providers.

Aimee Eubanks Davis, the chief people officer for the New York City-based Teach For America and a board member for Education Pioneers, has watched the venture grow since its startup years and draws parallels between



I finished the summer feeling like now whenever there’s a big problem, I want to have these different folks around the table to put their heads together because the solutions become so much richer.”

VERONICA MADRIGAL
EDUCATION PIONEERS ALUMNA

the trajectory of Education Pioneers and that of TFA, which enlists high-performing college graduates to teach for two years in disadvantaged schools.

In its first 10 years, TFA tripled its teaching corps from an initial group of 460 in 1990 to 1,400 new corps members in 2000. From there, the organization began experiencing a high rate of growth, adding 2,300 new members in 2002.

Mr. Morgan said that as Education Pioneers has grown, it has moved from hiring generalists to focusing on bringing in specialists, and building a strong recruitment team to attract talent.

Eliminating Misconceptions

Education Pioneers alumna Veronica Madrigal recently completed a 10-week summer internship. Ms. Madrigal, who was placed with a charter school in the nation’s capital, said she worked to create content for a new website for the school.

She said that having worked earlier in the 45,000-student District of Columbia school system through Teach For America, she gained insight into the differences in how district-run and charter schools are managed.

But perhaps even more valuable were the workshops with other fellows in her Washington-area cohort, said Ms. Madrigal.

“It was one of the best experiences in my summer to sit around with so many professional backgrounds to examine some of the big problems and issues in education,” she said, “and hear the way that each different perspective informed a different aspect of the solutions we were generating.”

Before entering the program, Ms. Madrigal

said, she had anticipated having vast differences of opinion about how education should be led and managed from fellows coming from a business background.

"I was ready for a whole lot of 'let the market solve the problem,'" she said. "But I ended up feeling awful about my preconceived notions because everybody I met was fabulous, and ... they had plenty of insights beyond that stereotypical view.

"I finished the summer feeling like now whenever there's a big problem, I want to have these different folks around the table to put their heads together because the solutions become so much richer," she said.

Likewise, Education Pioneers alumna Annie Hsu, who recently completed her 10-week summer internship with the education technology company Chegg, in Santa Clara, Calif., said the experience also challenged her assumptions about those currently working in education.

Ms. Hsu, who comes from a for-profit background and is now finishing up her master's degree in business administration at the University of California, Berkeley, said the experience opened her eyes to the number of highly competent and qualified people in the field.

'Diving in Head First'

Another fellow, Kaleah Williams, is finishing a master's in public administration with a focus in nonprofit management and plans to open a residential school for foster children in Georgia.

That dream led her to apply to Education Pioneers after working in for-profit management consulting.

"I had no prior experience with education, so I'm really getting hands-on experience and diving in head first," she said.

Ms. Williams was placed with the University of Virginia's Darden-Curry Partnership for Leaders in Education in Charlottesville, Va., where she works with school districts around the country to support their school turnaround efforts.

She said the experience has taught her a great deal about what it means to run a school and helped inform her next steps. Previously, Ms. Williams said, "I thought that ... I could just hire people who knew what they were doing and that would be the end of it."

But, after working in her capacity as a fellow, she said she now realizes how important it is for everyone in the school to have a strong understanding of the education landscape.

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Spotlight Turns on Memphis' Remake

Array of strategies aims to transform Tennessee's largest district

By Jaclyn Zubrzycki
Memphis, Tenn.

With a growing charter school sector, a new state-run district with plans to expand, and a reconfigured central office, Memphis is poised to become the next national center for New Orleans-style school governance.

Even as a commission spent the past two years planning for the largest school district merger in the nation's history—the former Memphis city district and an adjacent suburban system became the unified 140,000-student, 222-school Shelby County district on July 1—the landscape of governance within the legacy city school system was changing rapidly to favor parental choice and more autonomous schools.

The changes underway here include:

- A rapidly expanding array of charter schools. Home to just three charter schools 10 years ago, Memphis now has 41 charters, and more are on the way, including schools that will be part of some of the nation's best-known charter networks.
- A growing Achievement School District. The nation's second state-run school district, Tennessee's Achievement School District oversees 12 schools in the city and plans to run more than 50, most of them within Memphis, over the next five years.
- An "Innovation Zone." Created by the district as the analogue to the state-run district, the Innovation Zone, or I-Zone, encompasses 13 schools that have budget and hiring autonomy.

As a model for the Memphis efforts, district, charter, and state leaders are looking down the Mississippi River to New Orleans, where the state-run Recovery School District has converted most of the public schools in the city to charter status. The goal is to create a "system of schools rather than a school system," said Bradley Leon, the new chief

innovation officer for the Shelby County district.

"Our belief is that Memphis is poised to be either the first or among the first major urban centers to fully and deeply transform public education for all kids—in our case, without having had to suffer a hurricane to get there," said Barbara Hyde, the president of the Hyde Family Foundations, a philanthropy in Memphis that funds some of the efforts.

She referred to Hurricane Katrina, whose destructive path in 2005 opened the way for an accelerated remake of the New Orleans school system, where more than 80 percent of students now attend charter schools.

"We have an unprecedented alignment of human-capital partners, a pipeline of talent, demonstrated high-performing school models, and a pipeline of new charter schools coming into the city," Ms. Hyde said.

Setting the Scene

State and local policy changes over the past few years have cleared the way for some of the shifts in Memphis and helped draw the interest of charter operators around the country.

Then-Gov. Phil Bredesen, a Democrat, signed Tennessee's First to the Top Act into law in 2010, which created the Achievement School District. The same year, Tennessee received a federal Race to the Top grant that included funds for the ASD. A separate 2011 state law opened enrollment in charter schools to all students and removed the cap on the number of schools.

"The policy context in the state, with no cap on charters, no collective bargaining, and one of the best authorizers in the country [the ASD] means some of the best [charter operators] are saying, I want to come to Memphis," said Chris Barbic, the executive director of the ASD.

Teachers in the Shelby County district also work in an altered policy environment: Collective bargaining was repealed in 2011; a 2013 state law requires teachers and principals to mutually agree on whether or not a teacher would work at a given school; and Tennessee teachers' evaluations are now

tied to their students' scores on the state exams. The merged district has also moved away from seniority-based hiring.

Those changes have made the city fertile ground for the expansion of alternative-certification programs like Teach for America and Teach Memphis, according to Athena Turner, the executive director of Teach for America in Memphis.

Benjamin Fenton, the founder of New Leaders, a New York City-based group that trains aspiring principals and consults on school and district leadership, said the district's focus on school-level leadership, and philanthropic investment from local and national foundations, had brought his organization to the city in 2004 and opened the doors for others since.

The state also sent a signal by hiring Mr. Barbic, the founder of the Houston-based YES Prep charter network, to oversee the Achievement School District schools.

A Proof Point

Mr. Barbic said that Shelby County's schools would prove the benefits of school choice, both for families and for teachers, enabling them to choose the best school from a range of operators. He said he imagines district-run Memphis-area schools and the ASD working together in "co-opetition"—friendly competition—to improve.

Dorsey Hopson II, the district's new superintendent, is equally enthusiastic about the potential for dramatic change. "If we could give all of our schools the autonomy that the I-Zone has and the ASD has and the charter schools have—I think it'd be a recipe for success," he said.

Meanwhile, the merger of the Memphis and Shelby County districts opened up opportunities for conversations about just how the central office should be structured. Some 300 out of 1,000 central-office jobs were cut in the resulting reorganization, according to Mr. Hopson.

"When [the merger] started, initially it felt like a mess. But it turned out to be an extraordinary opportunity to throw everything up in the air and look at how to create a whole new system," said Ms. Hyde.

The changes are not uncontroversial, though.

Standing Together for Strong Community Schools, a nonprofit group in the state, views the state-run district and the growing charter sector as a move away from local control. Its members protest what their website describes as "well-funded special interests intent on dismantling our school systems, diverting public money from public schools, and limiting the voice of Tennessee citizens in shaping education policy through our local elected school boards."

The ASD and the district's I-Zone share the goal of raising the 69 Memphis schools that ranked in the state's bottom 5 percent on state standardized tests into the top 25 percent of schools, and both began taking charge of schools last school year after receiving an infusion of money from the state.

The ASD functions as an authorizer for six schools in the city and operates an additional six Memphis schools as "achievement schools," which are run as though they were a separate charter-management organization within the ASD. The achievement schools took over a feeder pattern of schools in Frayser, a particularly troubled area of the city.

Each school in the achievement district is required to accept all students who had previously been zoned to the school. The rule means charter operators must prove that they can show strong results without "creaming" students, or somehow enrolling an easier-to-teach group of students than the regular public schools do.

Innovation Zone

Prominent national charter operators, including YES Prep and the Oakland, Calif.-based Aspire, plan to open schools within the ASD in the next few years.

Mr. Barbic said he anticipates that by 2016, the ASD will run as many as 53 schools—most of them in Memphis—and serve as many as 19,000 students.

The 13 schools in the district's I-Zone are granted some of the same budget and hiring autonomy as a charter school or a school in the ASD. Once a school becomes part of the I-Zone, every teacher must reapply for his or her job. Some schools in the zone have an extended school day, and principals can select which interventions they'd like to use in their schools.

Antonio Burt, who is in his second year as the principal of Ford Road Elementary School, in the Westwood community, said the flexibility allowed him to blend various strategies he'd learned in New Leaders trainings and from colleagues around the country.

His school has an extended school day and a schedule that changes every few weeks to allow for longer blocks of instruction. "The I-Zone helped us maneuver around some red tape," Mr. Burt said.

Despite the longer workday and an atmosphere Mr. Burt proudly described as competitive, the school lost just two teachers last year and was recognized as among the state's most-improved schools.

While the state-run district can technically take over any school in the bottom 5 percent, Mr. Barbic said the ASD hosted community meetings and worked with the regular school district to determine which schools should be taken over.

Superintendent Hopson said that the regular district had been able to keep some schools under its own authority.

"Whenever we've said, hey, for community reasons or historic reasons, we would like to run these schools, and put these schools in our I-Zone, the response has always been, well, show me what your plan is," he said.

The I-Zone schools showed some of the highest gains on reading and math tests in the state last year, higher than both the rest of the district and the ASD. Helping parents navigate the mix of choices in the district is challenging, however.

Changing Landscape

Greg Thompson, the executive director of the Tennessee Charter School Center, which incubates and advocates for charter schools, said his organization was working on a website that would help parents understand what schools are available to them.

But Beverly Goliday, who has six grandchildren in the district, said that at this particular moment, "it is very complicated to find a school."

Although the expansion of the charter schools in other districts, including Philadelphia, has led some district leaders to raise concerns, Mr. Hopson is optimistic.

"Obviously, as more charters come online, enrollment in the district's going to go down," he said. "But the main focus or issue should be on making sure we have as many good schools as possible."

He said there were still some details to work out: For instance, he said, state funding should change to reflect the district's expenses in administering charter schools.

Still, the pace of change isn't slowing anytime soon, both because of the expansion of the ASD and the I-Zone and because of a forthcoming wrinkle in the merger: Six suburban districts in the area are expected to vote to create their own school boards and separate from the merged system this fall.

With that prospect looming, the merged Shelby County district does not yet know whether it will have 80,000, 100,000, or 140,000 students in the next school year. That uncertainty "keeps us on our toes," Mr. Hopson said.

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FOCUS ON: SCHOOL LEADERS

Chicago Initiative Aims to Upgrade Principal Pipeline

By Lesli A. Maxwell

Even with nearly 50 schools shutting down at the end of this month, Chicago education officials have been barreling ahead with plans to groom a large crop of high-performing principals that they say represents the most ambitious effort the city has undertaken to upgrade its school leadership ranks.

The goal, said Chicago schools CEO Barbara Byrd-Bennett, is to install some 300 leaders in the system's 600-plus schools by the start of the 2014-15 academic year who meet more-rigorous eligibility criteria and demonstrate the skills that district leaders believe are essential to turning around chronically underperforming schools.

The initiative also involves a new principal-evaluation system, bonus pay for principals who meet district performance goals, and the use of outside coaches to help promising current school leaders get even better.

"We are really focused on our school leaders as a key lever for creating better schools for all of our children," Ms. Byrd-Bennett said. "You do not have great schools without great leaders."

Central to the district's initiative is a \$10 million investment from private sources in the Chicago Leadership Collaborative, a partnership with four outside providers that had already been working independently with the school system to prepare principals.

As part of that partnership, the University of Illinois at Chicago, Loyola University, Teach For America, and New Leaders have all been tapped by the district to recruit and selectively screen candidates before providing them full-year principal residencies in high-needs schools that are on an upward student-achievement trajectory.

Among other assistance, the four partners have helped the district shape its new eligibility criteria, as well as its revised "competencies"—the set of skills that any principal-candidate will have to demonstrate before being approved for the hiring pool. The same competencies will be used to evaluate sitting principals' job performance.

The partners meet monthly with one another and top district leaders.

"The benefit of this arrangement is that the district brings those of us who are providers to the table to be part of their strategic team on improving leadership," said Steven Tozer, the director of the urban education leadership program at the University of Illinois at Chicago. "We're in their business, and they are in our business."

Groundwork Laid

The new program is the latest in a series of initiatives aimed at improving principal quality in the city and state. The New York City-based Wallace Foundation helped finance earlier school-leadership-improvement initiatives in Chicago, which focused primarily on better mentoring for principals.

And Illinois lawmakers, a few years ago, passed legislation intended to improve principal-preparation programs across the state. The lawmakers gave each of the programs

principals will successfully complete the eligibility and selection process, but their expectations are high. Still, not everyone in the district is embracing the new approach.

The initiative has been rolling out against the backdrop of the large wave of elementary school closures that roiled the city for months and fractured relationships between Mayor Rahm Emanuel, who controls the school system, and major education players such as the Chicago Teachers Union and neighborhood organizations upset about the closings.

In his 2010 campaign for mayor, Mr. Emanuel, a Democrat, said he would push for more accountability for principals.

Clarice Berry, the president of the local principals' and administrators' union, said she's still incredulous that the initiative was created with little input from her association and a broad base of principals around the city. She's also skeptical that the effort will last more than a few years before it's upended by a different idea.

For their part, district officials say they did



Eligibility has gone through several phases in my time. What I had to do to become eligible was take a test and have good recall to get the right answers. Now, you've got to put yourself through a real-life situation and come up with good plans on how you are going to manage your school.

SHENETHE PARKS

Principal, Bret Harte Elementary School, Chicago's Hyde Park

until 2014 to meet stricter criteria for how they recruit candidates and train them, which helped lay the groundwork for Chicago's efforts now.

The first full year of the Chicago Leadership Collaborative has not yet ended, so district officials don't know yet how many aspiring prin-

consult closely with a small focus group of high-performing principals—current and retired—to help them shape the overall strategy for upgrading school leadership.

"They've never been happy with principals for as long as a decade or more," Ms. Berry said of district officials. "Each successive ad-

ministration that comes in here tries something new.”

Ms. Berry also said that principals who are losing their jobs because of school closures must go through the new eligibility process as though they were new to the profession. That process includes a rigorous “day in the life” simulation, in which aspiring principals are put through the paces of an actual day in a high-needs school.

“Can you imagine having to do that when you’ve already been a principal?” she said.

Some residents who serve on the city’s local school councils—elected panels of parents, teachers, and community members who select their schools’ principals from a candidate pool provided by the district and approve their schools’ annual budgets—are concerned that they have also had little opportunity to weigh in on the components of the initiative.

Excluding Outsiders?

Josh Radinsky, an education professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago who serves on the citywide local-school-council panel, an advisory body, said a chief worry is that qualified principal-candidates who come in search of jobs in Chicago schools may be shut out if they are not graduates of one of the district’s four partner programs.

District leaders, though, said the hiring pool will not be exclusive to graduates of those programs.

Another issue, Mr. Radinsky said, is the new principal-evaluation system, which will tie half the performance review to student academic gains, such as “on track” indicators showing how many students in a school—as early as 3rd grade—are on pace to eventually graduate based on attendance, grades, and rates of misconduct.

The on-track indicator, Mr. Radinsky said, was designed to help principals improve their practice, but has not been proven as a valid and reliable measure of performance.

The other half of principals’ evaluations will be based on how well they meet the six new “competencies”: continuous improvement of teachers; setting up professional learning communities; building a culture of college and career readiness; family and community engagement; self-discipline; and vision.

Improving school leadership citywide extends to sitting principals who are the targets of the new professional-development and coaching efforts, said Steven Gering, Chicago’s chief leadership-development officer, who is overseeing that part of the principal-quality initiative.

The professional development will be tailored, depending on where principals are in their career trajectories, so that first-year leaders receive supports and training different

from those of more senior leaders. Brand-new principals, for example, take part in monthly meetings with experienced principals who offer concrete advice and share lessons.

‘Rising’ Leaders

One critical focus area is school leaders who the district has dubbed “rising” principals—those who are demonstrating promise but still need support and training to reach their potential. Starting next school year, current principals will be offered development opportunities, Mr. Gering said.

One such rising principal is Shenethe Parks of Bret Harte Elementary School in Chicago’s Hyde Park neighborhood. Her students are predominantly African-American and poor, and the school’s academic rating is “level 2,” Chicago’s label for schools that are performing more or less in the middle of the pack on the mix of school performance goals. In 2011-12, Harte earned 64.3 percent of the available points for performance.

She was one of about 100 rising school leaders tapped to be in the first cohort of principals who would meet regularly to learn from one another and be coached by veteran urban educators from outside the city.

Ms. Parks, who has been the principal at Bret Harte for seven years after serving first as an assistant principal and earning a master’s degree in educational administration, said the nine-month program that brought her face to face with like-minded colleagues on a regular basis was enriching, especially in the area of family and community engagement.

Bret Harte Elementary has received weak ratings from survey respondents for the quality of its parent engagement, an area Ms. Parks said she really wants to improve.

That skill set, she said, will be crucial to her and her staff members in the coming months as they begin to receive 7th and 8th grade students from a nearby school that will be shut down as part of the city’s wave of closures.

“Having conversations with my colleagues from around the city to talk about how to blend school communities and how to build a new school culture is essential for me right now,” Ms. Parks said. “We need to get this right in being a welcoming school and making it inviting to everyone who ends up coming here.

“I also can’t do this by myself,” she said. “I have to have a vision for the school that the whole community will buy into.”

By taking part in the leadership-development program, Ms. Parks had to go through the new eligibility and selection process outlined for new principal-candidates to see how she would measure up.

That included the daylong simulation exercise as a principal in a new school assignment. Among other tasks, Ms. Parks had to watch

More districts focus on talent pool

Chicago is among a number of large urban districts that are pursuing large-scale initiatives to improve the talent pipelines leading to principals’ offices. According to Jody Spiro, the director of education leadership for the New York City-based Wallace Foundation, similar efforts are underway in the school districts in New York City; Denver; Charlotte-Mecklenburg, N.C.; Prince George’s County, Md.; Hillsborough County, Fla.; and Gwinnett County, Ga. (The foundation also supports coverage of educational leadership in *Education Week*.)

Wallace embarked two years ago on a five-year, \$75 million investment in all six of those school systems to support the districts’ strategies to identify, train, evaluate, and support principals. Like Chicago’s effort, these districts are partnering with outside providers who are required to work together to compare and learn from one another on how to improve results for the school leaders they prepare, Ms. Spiro said.

“These seven districts may be the only ones in the country working in this way,” she said. “It’s very innovative.”

—LESLI A. MAXWELL

a classroom lesson and write a feedback and coaching session for the teacher. She also had to review student data and come up with a short-term plan to present to her district supervisor at the end of the day.

“Eligibility has gone through several phases in my time,” Ms. Parks said. “What I had to do to become eligible was take a test and have good recall to get the right answers. Now, you’ve got to put yourself through a real-life situation and come up with good plans on how you are going to manage your school.

“It’s a much more authentic way of seeing who can do this work.”

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FOCUS ON: SUPERINTENDENTS

Wanted: Schools Chiefs for Big-Name Districts

By Jaclyn Zubrzycki

Districts across the country, including some of the nation's largest, are facing a spate of superintendent vacancies.

Schools chiefs or interim superintendents will be leaving this year or next in at least 17 well-known districts, including Baltimore; Boston; Clark County, Nev.; Indianapolis; and Wake County, N.C.

And while school officials in some places, such as Baltimore, Boston, and Oakland, Calif., have indicated they intend to continue on paths laid out by their departing leaders, the turnover elsewhere may signal major changes—and go hand in hand, in some cases, with a shift in district priorities or governance restructuring.

For example:

- In Indianapolis, the search for a superintendent comes after a school board election in which numerous visions of the district's future were floated.
- In Camden, N.J.; Memphis, Tenn.; and Prince George's County, Md., the turnover at the top is accompanying dramatic changes in governance, such as a state takeover or district merger; and,
- In Atlanta; Columbus, Ohio; and El Paso, Texas, new leaders are needed to take the helm of school systems that have been through major cheating scandals.

Whether as an indicator of change or of commitment to a path, "superintendents become the representation of what the reform [plan in a district] is about. In selecting the next superintendent in these districts, we're sending a very strong signal in terms of the direction of the district," said Kenneth Wong, a professor of education at Brown University.

The search for a new leader can prompt a board or mayor to ask, "Are you pursuing the right reforms for the right reasons?" said Michael D. Casserly, the executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, in Washington.

Seasonal Churn

The number of vacancies is not in itself

unusual, said Mr. Casserly. Superintendents tend to stay in urban districts for three to four years. And spring is when many leaders announce their intentions for the upcoming school year.

His organization usually sees between eight and 12 of its members searching for new leaders each year. (This year, there are 10 so far.)

Andrés Alonso, who announced last week that he will retire after six years as Baltimore's superintendent, said there has been speculation every year since he arrived that the high-profile leader would be departing for a bigger city. He is leaving instead to become a professor of practice at Harvard University and to care for his aging parents.

But that churn at the top is detrimental for districts striving for improvements that take time to implement, said Daniel A. Domenech, the executive director of the American Association of School Administrators, in Alexandria, Va.

Boards searching for new district leaders have to make sure a candidate is suited to the district's particular challenges, Mr. Casserly said. Those challenges range from cyclical du-

ties, such as contract negotiations and bond levies, to the more unusual, such as a court order or a scandal.

that includes schools from the neighboring suburban district in Shelby County. Meanwhile, in Atlanta, Columbus, and El Paso, new leaders will need to help regain community trust after widely publicized scandals alleging or involving cheating by teachers or administrators on student tests.

Chains of Command

State- and city-level involvement in the governance of many urban districts—through arrangements like mayoral control or state takeovers—means that superintendent searches can be slowed or shaped by outside political factors.

"With mayoral involvement or state involvement [in school districts], you have a more complex government arrangement. The new breed of superintendent has to have the skill set and knowledge base and hopefully some experience in working across government agencies," said Mr. Wong.

In Boston, where Superintendent Carol R. Johnson is retiring after six years, longtime

“What’s difficult about the superintendency is that you’re not only an educator, you’re a politician. And now—oh, my God—you can go to jail. That’s a whole different dynamic.”

JEAN-CLAUDE BRIZARD

Senior Adviser, College Board

ties, such as contract negotiations and bond levies, to the more unusual, such as a court order or a scandal.

In Boston, for instance, a new leader will have the task of implementing the city's first new student-assignment plan in decades, said Michael D. O'Neill, the chairman of the Boston school committee.

In Memphis, a new leader in 2014-15 must preside over a newly merged school system

Mayor Thomas M. Menino, a driving force in school improvement efforts over his 20 years as mayor, is also not seeking re-election.

Mr. O'Neill said that the school board will likely wait until a new mayor is elected to select a permanent superintendent.

In Camden and Prince George's County, incoming leaders will be the first to navigate new governance structures.

Camden's school board had been searching for a permanent chief since last year. But a state takeover early in April puts the state squarely in charge of finding that person.

In Prince George's County, the school board already had been searching for a permanent superintendent to replace William R. Hite Jr. when the Maryland legislature made key changes to the district's governance.

The new law shifts the responsibility for picking the board's chairman and vice chairman and the district leader—newly dubbed a chief executive officer and vested with new powers, such as the authority to close schools—into the hands of the county executive. The executive will choose the district CEO from a group of candidates selected by a state-appointed committee.

Given such varied governance structures, running a school system “takes enormous understanding of the local context,” said Mr. Alonso, the departing Baltimore chief. “In many cities, there's a variability and complexity to how districts are organized. It's no longer standardized,” he said.

Complex Structures

His district, New York City, and New Orleans, for instance, have reinvented themselves as “portfolio districts” emphasizing school-level autonomy. Rising numbers of charter schools complicate district management in other districts as well.

In Detroit, Indianapolis, Memphis, and New Orleans, the public school landscape includes state-run schools, charter schools, and regular public schools.

Andy Smarick, a Lawrenceville, N.J.-based partner at Bellwether Education Partners, a consulting organization, suggested that in some urban districts, the timing may be right for new leaders to push districts even further toward shrinking their central offices and decreasing the number of schools directly run by the district, among other changes.

“I think we're going to know a lot about the next decade of urban education reform by seeing who winds up getting picked to be superintendent,” Mr. Smarick said.

“In places like Louisiana, places with mayoral control, ... places with state-run districts, ... there's a growing number of cities where it appears likely that a different type of candidate with a different type of message has the ability to take control.”

But Mr. Casserly was skeptical that such changes would be widely pursued.

“There has been a diversification of public education,” he said, “particularly in cities—the rise of educational management and charter organizations and the like—but I think they're jumping the gun by saying that suddenly we're on the cusp of a huge governance revolution.”

In Indianapolis, however, where the state recently took over four schools and where the idea of mayoral control has been floated, some school board members are considering dramatic change.

“We're talking potentially about the dismantlement of the entire central office and reworking it into something that gives more autonomy,” school board President Diane Arnold said. “We need that person that can work with us in a partnership to make that happen.”

Ms. Arnold said the district's job description specifies that a new superintendent must support school-level autonomy.

Jean-Claude Brizard, who was the CEO of the Chicago schools from May 2011 until October 2012 and is now a senior adviser for the New York City-based College Board, said that leaders can support autonomy, but it requires a mindset different from the one many superintendents have had.

“I think [that kind of leadership] is harder,” he said. “You don't feel as much in control.”

Both Mr. Domenech—a former chief of the Fairfax County, Va., schools—and Mr. Brizard said that qualified candidates often are not interested in the demands and public scrutiny of the superintendency.

The recent indictment of retired Atlanta schools Superintendent Beverly Hall in the wake of a cheating scandal in that district has added one more layer of complexity to the task of luring candidates to the job, Mr. Brizard said.

“What's difficult about the superintendency is that you're not only an educator, you're a politician,” he said. “And now—oh, my God—you can go to jail. That's a whole different dynamic.”

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Mich. School Chief Focuses on STEM Learning

By Erik W. Robelen

Veteran educator Linda S. Hicks arrived in 2010 to lead the city school district in Battle Creek, Mich. Capitalizing on its multinational food manufacturers and nearby research and training facilities, she immediately decided to tap the area's potential as a source of future STEM-focused jobs for many of her students.

And so she began taking steps to enhance the 5,300-student district's STEM offerings, including revamping an elementary school and a middle school to bring a STEM focus. In addition, she launched a district-wide STEM education panel to help build a strong and sustained vision for education in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

"This is the perfect place [for an emphasis on those disciplines], because there are so many future STEM opportunities for kids," says Hicks.

Noting the district's high concentration of students living in poverty—about 75 percent are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch—she says: "We have some of the most vulnerable children. [They] need to be inspired. ... Our kids need to see some real potential opportunities for their future."

Nicknamed "Cereal City," Battle Creek is home to Kellogg Co., maker of such well-known products as Special K, Frosted Flakes, and Eggo waffles, plus a major manufacturing facility for Post Foods, which makes Post Raisin Bran, Grape Nuts, and other cereals. In addition, the International Food Training Institute, which trains food-safety officials, is based in the city. And the company Covance recently opened a nutritional-chemistry and food-safety laboratory.

LINDA S. HICKS
Superintendent
Battle Creek Public Schools, Mich.



Brian Widdis for Education Week

Observers describe Hicks—who is 54 and has 30-plus years' experience in education as a teacher, principal, and superintendent—as a passionate and hands-on leader who is determined to create meaningful opportunities for disadvantaged young people. And she's seen as quick to seize on and maximize opportunities to promote enhanced STEM learning, and also to understand the importance of providing a sustained focus on the issue.

"I have been so impressed with her STEM commitment," says Arelis E. Diaz, a program officer with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, which is supporting the district's involvement with a recently launched STEM teacher-fellowship program in Michigan.

It's not just her leadership on STEM that

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has impressed Diaz, but the superintendent's broader vision and determination to help the district's students overcome disadvantages to succeed in academics and life.

"She has a courageous spirit about her that I really admire," Diaz says. "She basically has a 'no excuses' approach, that we have to do what it takes to ensure that all students can learn, and that it can be done in Battle Creek public schools."

One opportunity Hicks seized came when she was approached about having her district take part in a STEM teacher-fellowship program. Developed by the Princeton, N.J.-based Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, the program recruits individuals with STEM expertise to become teachers in those subjects. As part of the process, participants get intensive clinical experience in local schools, where each one is paired with a classroom teacher.

Building a Teaching Pool

"Linda really understands that this is about developing capacity and talent within her district," says Audra M. Watson, a program officer for the Woodrow Wilson Foundation. "She sees this as an opportunity to not only grow her own strong and high-quality teachers, but also as an opportunity for her own teachers to continue their professional development."

Watson notes that the superintendent was personally involved in selecting teachers to mentor the fellows, and also spent time in professional-development meetings with those teachers to "make sure she had a sense of what was happening, to make sure she set the vision."

Another priority for Hicks has been the new STEM focus at an elementary and a middle school. The elementary school initiated the change in the 2011-12 academic year, while the neighboring middle school transitioned its 6th grade to a STEM-focused curriculum starting this academic year.

"This is one of my babies," Hicks says of Dudley STEM Elementary School. "I call it my 'school of inspiration,' where we put a lot of supports to help kids become familiar with career paths that they hadn't even thought of, or heard of."

The district is already the site of the Battle Creek Area Math and Science Center, one of 33 such centers across Michigan that offer STEM coursework to advanced students at the secondary level, as well as provide professional development for teachers and develop curricular materials.

The center will soon move to a major new facility under construction in the city, where Hicks hopes more local students can enroll.

"I want to make sure I have a pipeline so

more of my students have an opportunity to go to this school," she says, even while saying she wants more advanced STEM opportunities in her district's existing high school, too.

Analyzing Data

Kathy M. Grosso, the STEM facilitator at Dudley STEM Elementary School, says the core idea in that school is to integrate STEM concepts across the curriculum and better prepare students academically in math and science.

In addition, the school organizes special events that get families involved, such as a recent Night of Flight—held at an airplane hangar in Battle Creek that's part of Western Michigan University's school of aviation—that featured a paper-airplane contest for students.

Grosso also was named last year by the superintendent to oversee the new districtwide STEM panel, which is composed of school principals, guidance counselors, teachers, and a representative from a local community college.

To get started, says Grosso, the district is collecting and analyzing data on who enrolls in STEM classes and who succeeds, among other information.

"That will inform the courses that we offer, especially at middle and high schools, and ensure that we're providing the right kind of support," especially for African-American and female students, Grosso says, noting two populations that traditionally have been underrepresented in the STEM fields.

She also praises Hicks for being deliberate in seizing opportunities to improve the system's schools.

"She's really been good at listening, being aware of what's happening in the community, and taking advantage of that opportunity," Grosso says.

The STEM facilitator also finds Hicks to have an inspiring vision that goes beyond rhetoric.

"I really feel committed to her vision because it's rooted in kids, really rooted in kids, not just saying it," says Grosso. "A lot of people say 'students first,' but that is the foundation of everything she does."

Coverage of leadership, expanded learning time, and arts education is supported in part by a grant from The Wallace Foundation, at www.wallacefoundation.org.

LESSON LEARNED



In education, I believe we don't have a day to spare, so people probably think I'm too hands-on, but it's the only way I can know what's happening. ... There is no part of my being that accepts that kids are not performing at high levels."

LINDA S. HICKS

Superintendent
Battle Creek Public Schools, Mich.

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Rural Ind. School Leader Helps Wire a Community

By Michelle R. Davis

Dennis Stockdale arrived as the superintendent in Garrett, Ind., six years ago, when the Garrett-Keyser-Butler school district seemed as remotely connected to 21st-century learning as its rural landscape might suggest.

Today, amid the farms and small-town stores, all three schools in this 1,800-student district have been equipped with Wi-Fi, elementary school students use their own iPads in class, older students take their MacBook laptops home every day, and a state-of-the-art, totally wired high school opened this school

year.

Stockdale says he also made sure that all students in his system, 21 miles north of Fort Wayne, 73 percent of whom qualify for subsidized lunches, have equitable access to the Internet beyond school hours.

“The whole key is individualizing instruction and education for the student,” Stockdale says. “We’ve got to reinvent school and make it a place where the kids want to come.”

That change didn’t come overnight—the school had few computers and outdated Internet connections when Stockdale arrived—and it took some convincing, particularly when it came to the school board, says Anthony

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DENNIS STOCKDALE

Superintendent
Garrett-Keyser-Butler Community School
District, Garrett, Ind.



L. Griffin, the board's vice president. And though Stockdale was passionate, not everyone on the board was ready for the high-tech ideas he proposed. "Even myself, I had some questions," Griffin says.

But Stockdale pushed board members to attend conferences highlighting the possibilities of a 1-to-1 device system. He urged them to travel to other districts to see initiatives already in place, made his own presentations using technology, and ultimately made sure members had their own iPads for board business.

"Some of the board members that were not much for it, when they saw what it could do and where it could go, that helped sway them," Griffin says.

And Stockdale, 48, found the money to get the job done. To begin with, he redirected money that parents already were paying in state fees for printed textbooks into buying devices and using electronic curricula.

"We're not dependent on textbooks at all," he says. "We're spending money differently than we ever spent it before."

Teachers' Roles

Stockdale emphasized professional development as the devices were rolled out. Now, teachers are curating curricula and creating their own electronic-resource libraries to promote individualized learning. Rather than group by grade level for early-grades mathematics, students are grouped by learning level and outcomes, which can change daily or weekly, Stockdale says.

"Technology is not a replacement for teachers," he says. "It's a tool and a resource for efficiency in educational delivery. Teachers can do more because they have that tool."

In addition to using textbook fees, the district received a \$300,000 classroom-innovation grant from the Indiana Department of Education to help offset costs. "Our kids deserve these resources as much as any area, and it's our responsibility to provide those," Stockdale says.

Once the 1-to-1 program was in place, however, there were worries that students who had Internet access at home would have an unfair advantage over those who didn't. The district used some of the grant money to buy 100 mobile Wi-Fi hot spots that students can take home to provide access.

In addition, the district wired the community center in Garrett with Wi-Fi, so students have access there. The local library is also wired, and in the new high school, part of which opened this school year, administrators will denote a wireless area that will be open until 10 p.m. on school days for students to work.

But getting to this point wasn't all smooth

sailing. The district experienced what Stockdale calls an "implementation dip." For a year, test scores fell while educators worked out the kinks of the 1-to-1 program and continued training. Stockdale says he faced some criticism, but the teachers, the community, and most board members stood behind him.

Now, scores have rebounded. For example, the middle school's state rating went from a D during the implementation dip to an A last year, according to the state education department.

Amber L. Hartsough, the president of the J.E. Ober Elementary School PTA, says the positive effects of Stockdale's efforts are evident. Students created a video to highlight why they needed a new playground, for example, which they posted on the school website.

"My 1st grader knows more about technology than I do," she says. "In today's world, they're going to need that."

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LESSON LEARNED



The whole key is individualizing instruction and education for the student. We've got to reinvent school and make it a place where the kids want to come."

DENNIS STOCKDALE

Superintendent
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District, Garrett, Ind.

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Missouri Educator Pushes Power of Social Media

By Michelle R. Davis

Kyle Pace has been training teachers to use technology since he was a student himself.

Now an instructional technology specialist for the 17,500-student Lee's Summit, Mo., school district, Pace recalls being fascinated with the computer his mother—a Missouri middle school teacher—received in her classroom when he was a child. His mother brought the computer home during the summer, and Pace taught himself to use it. He became so proficient that his mother, and her fellow teachers, would come to him for advice on the technology, particularly when Pace began attending the middle school himself.

"I informally became the teachers' go-to person. In the summer, they'd have me come over and they'd say, 'Teach me how to do this,'" says Pace, 36. "So teaching other teachers about technology has always felt very natural to me."

His skills have only leaped forward in his current job in Lee's Summit. This school year, he's helping train teachers to use Google Apps for Education and Chromebooks, or Google laptops, along with Gmail and Google Docs.

It's all pretty new. But Pace says if he needs advice on any of those endeavors, educators who are further along in the process are just a click away. He has created his own online network of experts whom he can access at any time. Pace himself is seen as a resource for others, speaking at conferences or providing training, using his social-networking expertise. "No one has to feel like they're isolated anymore," he says. "That's the beauty of social networking."

A former elementary school teacher, Pace says he once felt isolated in the classroom. Though he wanted to push the technology boundaries in his class, he didn't know others in his school or district who were trying to do the same thing. So he's making sure that teachers in Lee's Summit don't face the same issue. Social networking holds the key to that, he says.

For example, Pace often uses Twitter to find resources for teachers in his district; he calls it "connecting the dots" and helping guide others to new techniques.



KYLE PACE
Instructional Technology Specialist
Lee's Summit School District, Mo

Ryan Henriksen for Education Week

Social networking "is still daily guaranteed learning for me to find something that is immediately applicable for my job," he says. "An awesome byproduct of my networking is helping other people get the information they need."

He's encouraging teachers to do the same and build their own personal learning networks online. Pace pushed Richardson Elementary School 6th grade teacher Ashley Tegenkamp to venture onto Twitter, though she had never used it for professional development. He helped her connect with other teachers who have given her ideas for her own classroom, and Tegenkamp then decided to start a Twitter feed for her classroom to

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keep parents informed.

Currently, she is following several teachers who “flipped” their classrooms (a process in which teachers have students watch the lecture portion of a class at home on video, then do the homework or more hands-on work, in class), and is preparing to go in that direction with her own class. “Twitter is absolutely pushing me to be a better teacher,” she wrote in an email.

Twitter EdChats

Social networking has also altered the course of Pace’s professional life in many ways. Pace started with Twitter, and he became so enamored of the way he could connect with educators around the world that he began co-hosting Tuesday-evening EdChats on the social-networking site. Pace helps guide those online chats using Twitter’s 140-character posts to discuss a different educational topic every week. Topics have ranged from alternatives to high-stakes testing to the effects of “anytime” learning on the classroom; the chats often spawn in-depth discussions on blogs and other websites.

That role led Pace to like-minded technology educators with whom he began to collaborate. He now speaks at conferences with people like Eric Sheninger, the principal at New Milford High School in New Jersey, about social networking for educators. The aim is to inspire teachers to get outside their comfort zones and connect with other educators online.

Online and in face-to-face presentations, Pace brings his real-world experiences to others, says Sheninger, to help them find ways to surmount technology roadblocks in their own schools.

“Kyle is a practitioner. He works with teachers and is exposed to the budgetary realities that schools are faced with, as well as administrators that embrace a vision for tech integration and those that are resistant,” Sheninger says. “That allows him to be a very

powerful resource.”

Twitter also led Pace to learn about EdCamps, a so-called “unconference” movement springing up around the country. The freewheeling professional-development gatherings have no set agenda and are often centered around the use of technology in education. On the day of the event, attendees sign up, often on a large whiteboard, to make presentations. Participants are encouraged to drop in and out of sessions as they determine which are most relevant to their teaching practice.

Pace heard about EdCamps on Twitter and decided to organize one of his own. His first EdCamp, held in Kansas City, Mo., in 2010, drew more than 100 people. He’s since organized two others there, and attendance has grown.

“As the organizer, that’s always a bit of a tense moment that morning when you have that big piece of paper on the wall and you think, ‘Please let there be people who want to have a conversation,’” Pace says.

And it all came out of social networking. Pace says it’s unlikely, for example, he would have become a Google-certified teacher without finding out about it online. He would not have connected with Sheninger and others who have given him so many new techniques and resources to pass on to his teachers. And he wouldn’t know that a principal in a school outside Chicago is a few years ahead of his district in implementing those Google Chromebooks.

“At any time,” Pace says, “I can send him a tweet and say, ‘How did you do this?’”

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LESSON LEARNED



“As educators, we can get narrow-minded pretty fast being in our own little building all the time. With social networking, you get fresh viewpoints and varying perspectives. It opens up your thinking.”

KYLE PACE

Instructional Technology Specialist
Lee’s Summit School District, Mo

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