

serve the anonymity of schools that participated in our research.

School Leadership

According to the Model of Essential Supports, strong school leadership is based on a clear mission and vision for the school. It is broadly based and inclusive. It involves the principal, faculty and staff, parents, and the Local School Council.¹⁶ The principal and other administrators communicate well with teachers and involve them in school-level decision making. Teachers work with colleagues and administrators to formulate plans for school development, particularly those related to instructional improvement. The principal takes an active role in instruction and its development by recruiting and retaining effective staff members; encouraging teacher professional development, experimentation, and innovation; and reducing classroom interruption. Strong leadership communicates effectively with the school community. It is strategic and accepts responsibility for fair enforcement of policies, program implementation, and realizing the school's vision. School management is efficient and effective.

On the other hand, consolidated principal power and authoritarian decision making characterize weak school leadership. Weak leadership fails to articulate a clear vision for the school and does little to communicate goals and plans for development. It does not focus on instruction and there is little accountability. School management is chaotic and unpredictable. The principal fails to support teachers in their work, neither helping them in their professional development nor protecting them from interruptions to their work.

Lech Walesa Elementary School. Walesa Elementary School's principal is a strong leader. He provides numerous opportunities for teacher, staff, and parent involvement in key school decisions. He meets weekly with a schoolwide leadership team. He supports grade-level planning meetings and encourages open and honest discussion of issues facing the school. According to one teacher we interviewed, these meetings serve many purposes:

We have grade-level meetings where we get together to discuss what we are doing. We bring . . . our portfolios. We discuss problems we have. Decisions are mostly made in combination between teachers and administration. We discuss curriculum in our whole staff meetings and we vote on things.

The principal works with faculty to develop strategies to improve student performance on standardized tests. More importantly, he promotes an ambitious set of professional development activities for his staff. The principal expects a lot from his teachers and communicates his expectations to them. A teacher we interviewed observed, "The principal is a taskmaster, but he is not a dictator. He gives us autonomy to be able to do certain types of things." Finally, the principal tries to create an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. He sees to it that the school is orderly and the hallways are safe and quiet.

Professional Community

Teacher professional community refers to the quality of working relationships among teachers and other staff and the social and normative resources these relationships provide.¹⁷ In strong professional communities, teachers have a clear and common vision for the future and a shared sense of mission and goals. They have developed a common language and share similar beliefs and values. Teachers are deeply committed to high quality instruction; they share responsibility and accountability for their students' success and for achieving their school's goals. Teachers in strong professional communities are highly collaborative. They exchange information about what they've learned from professional experience and research and engage in reflective conversation about their own practices and assumptions. In strong professional communities there is a clear disposition toward ongoing learning and innovation. Members do not always agree on everything, but, because of high levels of trust, disagreement is most often constructive rather than destructive.

In weak professional communities, teachers work in relative isolation from one another. They may be cordial and interact socially, but they rarely share information, discuss problems, or collaborate. Teachers in weak professional communities do not feel accountable to colleagues or to the school as a whole. They do not share a vision for the future, nor do they agree on a set of goals for school development. They lack a common language and are guided by norms of autonomy and privacy. Disagreements are rarely channeled in productive directions. At best they remain unresolved, in a state of *détente* with teachers agreeing to disagree.

Albert Schweitzer Elementary School. Teachers at Schweitzer Elementary School have a strong professional community. A culture of peer support and collaborative learning permeates the school. There is a clear sense that teachers have a mission to teach their students. One teacher spoke about the ways in which the faculty shares knowledge about developing reading instruction:

We've adopted the peer-tutoring concept, where teachers who have reading degrees can come in and help beginning teachers or marginal teachers. Because of the new ISAT and IGAP scores, a lot of emphasis had been placed on comprehensive readings. . . . Each grade level meets at least once a week to discuss what we're teaching to make sure that we are all teaching the same strategies. We collaborate often so that gives a sense, it helps to give a feel of where our kids are, so that we can determine what the problem is before it gets to be an exacerbated problem.

Twice a month on Friday afternoons, teachers meet to hear outside speakers or do joint planning. Each week teachers at the same grade level have a block of common planning time to prepare lessons, develop ideas for thematic units, and ensure that their teaching is aligned with CPS academic standards and state learning goals. There is regular discussion of instructional strategies and student assessments. Informal sharing of ideas, curricula, and strategies is frequent. Teachers depend on each other a great deal. They call each other at night for advice. Sharing and mutual

support are integral components of this school's professional life.

Parent and Community Support

In schools with strong parent and community support, parents participate in school activities and contribute in significant ways to achieving school goals. Parents support their children's learning at home and are viewed by the school as a crucial resource. There is trust between parents and the school, characterized by mutual respect and confidence in each other's abilities. Schools with strong parent and community support aggressively promote that support.¹⁸ Teachers cultivate ties with parents and the surrounding community. They visit students' homes and attend neighborhood events. Teachers are knowledgeable about community and cultural issues that concern students and their families.

For schools with weak parent and community support, involving parents is not a priority. As a result, parents seldom help the school achieve its goals and may not support learning at home. Trust, respect, and confidence between parents and the school may be weak. The school is largely disconnected from the surrounding community and does not take advantage of the support parents and community organizations might provide.

Norman Borlaug Elementary School. Borlaug Elementary School has developed extensive parent support and involvement. A parent mentoring program anchors a number of other parent initiatives at the school. Graduates of this mentoring program recruit other parents to volunteer in the school and visit the homes of children who are not enrolled in early childhood programs. Borlaug employs program graduates to work as paraprofessionals in the school and has recently hired several parents to assist with its accelerated reader program. A coordinator of the parent mentoring program described it as follows:

Our goals are always the same: improving student achievement and creating a culture in the school, a community of learners where parents are actively engaged in the school and the learning process and working with the children.

Another coordinator continued:

What we are doing now is that every other Friday we are planning some kind of workshop for [parents] that before we didn't have. . . . Like, next Friday we are doing Helping with Homework. . . . We had a math workshop. We had a stress management workshop. Things that will help them here in school, and also at home with their kids. And they have been enjoying it a lot. They want more. . . . We asked them in the initial training what kind of workshops they would like, and we go from there.

Parents are clearly valued at the school. The principal encourages teachers to call home often. In addition, the school houses a community center where parent education, GED preparation, and other programs are provided.

Student-Centered Learning Climate

A strong student-centered learning climate is characterized by a number of factors including high expectations and press for student academic achievement and strong social support for learning from teachers, parents, and peers.¹⁹ Students feel their teachers know them personally and care about them as individuals. They count on teachers to notice if they are having academic or personal problems and give extra help. Students feel their peers think school is important. They have a sense of being physically and psychologically safe in their school and classroom. There are few disciplinary problems and those that occur are handled firmly and fairly. Teachers and students treat each other with respect and trust. A strong learning climate is supported by the school's efforts to develop and sustain a schoolwide focus on teaching and learning and optimize instructional time.

Weak learning climates lack a focus on academic learning. Students are not pressed toward high achievement and they receive little social support from teachers, parents, or peers. Students do not necessarily feel that their teachers know them personally or care about them as individuals. They may not feel that they can trust their teachers to be fair or notice

when they have problems. In weak learning climates, students may not feel physically or psychologically safe. Instructional time may be frequently interrupted and discipline problems may detract from teaching and student learning.

Elie Wiesel Elementary School. Wiesel Elementary School has a well-maintained and clean campus. There is tight security and teachers take proactive steps to prevent discipline problems. Teachers have high expectations for their students and expect them to exceed grade-level standards. One eighth-grade mathematics teacher, whose opinion of students is fairly typical of the faculty as a whole, explained that she pushes her students toward higher levels of achievement:

My main concern and priority is getting [students] at grade level in terms of math or beyond, preparing them for high school. So, my goal is to make sure these kids know how to solve . . . these mathematical problems they are going to be addressing in high school. My goal is to be sure that they are achieving at an 8.5, 8.0 minimum, at least for me and my standards, and have them be able to reach those goals. State Board and the Chicago Board of Education have their own standards.²⁰

In addition to pressing them to learn, teachers want their students to feel comfortable, supported, and cared for. Said one teacher:

I don't want [students] to feel intimidated. . . . If they have a question, [they should] feel free to ask a question. If you have a problem, feel free to come and talk to me. I'm their teacher, but I'm also their friend if they need.

Quality Instruction

In the Model of Essential Supports, high quality instruction is defined by three elements.²¹ The first is student exposure to subject matter—subject matter is introduced at a steady pace and coordinated within and across grade levels. Teachers may teach basic skills, but they seldom rely on repetition and review. The second is how teachers engage their students in that

subject matter. In high quality instruction, teachers make frequent use of intellectually challenging assignments that require students to study a topic in depth, ask students to communicate and explain what they have learned, and draw connections to problems and situations beyond school. The third element, pedagogy, concerns the instructional practices teachers use in the classroom.

The Model of Essential Supports focuses on two pedagogical approaches. The first, didactic teaching methods, refers to the use of whole-class presentation, recitation, and individual student work to transmit and promote the acquisition of specific knowledge. The second, interactive teaching methods, refers to the use of interactive, problem-oriented, differentiated strategies to promote analysis, application, and production of knowledge. High quality instruction is characterized by a balance between these two approaches with a relatively strong emphasis on interactive instruction. Finally, high quality instruction is supported by strong curricular and instructional materials and adequate time for teaching and learning.

Low quality instruction is characterized by slow introduction of subject matter, frequent review and re-teaching, and lack of coordination within and across grade levels. Teachers rarely expose their students to intellectually challenging subject matter and require little more than the acquisition of discrete pieces of knowledge and skills. Students engage subject matter superficially and are not often asked to apply, analyze, or evaluate it. Nor are students required to communicate, explain, or support their work or to connect it to a problem or situation beyond school. Teachers rely primarily on didactic teaching methods and make little use of interactive instruction. Curricular and instructional materials are weak; instructional time is not well preserved, nor is it used to full advantage.

Lech Walesa Elementary School. In addition to strong leadership, Walesa Elementary School also provides an example of some aspects of high quality instruction. Pacing and careful monitoring of instructional time characterize its classrooms. Most of the schoolwide curriculum is carefully planned so that each grade builds on the previous one and all

teachers in a given grade teach similar content. Teachers hold regular grade-level meetings to talk about their work and compare their progress.

Interactive and highly challenging teaching and learning can be seen in some Walesa classrooms. In one third-grade class we noted the following example. Students were asked to interview classmates about their favorite color and graph the results of their poll. The teacher demonstrated how to create x- and y-axes. "This is something you have to walk around and find out for yourself," the teacher said as she directed students to interview their classmates about their most and least favorite colors. As students worked on their graphs, the teacher circulated from table to table and encouraged her students to help each other, "Shanika, why did you decide to place this dot above 'blue' where you did? Tell the others at your table how you came to that answer." After about ten minutes, the teacher began a question-and-answer session that helped students interpret and analyze their graphs. Questions included "Which was the most liked color?" "Which was the least?" and "How do you know this?"

School Instructional Program Coherence

School instructional program coherence is one of the model's two overarching supports. It is defined by interrelated programs for students and staff that are guided by a common framework and pursued over a sustained period of time.²² Strong program coherence is present when this common framework directs all aspects of student learning and governs the working environment. Curriculum, instructional strategies, and student assessments are coordinated among grade-level teachers and across the school, showing a progression of more complex aspects of subject matter and intellectual challenge from one grade to the next. Key student support services such as tutoring, remedial instruction, parent education, and opportunities for parent involvement are aligned with the common framework. Administrators and teachers hold each other accountable for its implementation. The school makes the framework the focus of its professional development efforts and allocates resources to its continued development.

Schools with weak instructional program coherence lack a common framework. Their programs are fragmented and pull faculty and staff in different directions. There is little coordination among teachers within and across grade levels, and student support programs do not necessarily promote the school's instructional efforts. Faculty recruitment, hiring, accountability systems, and professional development are disconnected from any particular instructional focus. Different improvement initiatives may each address discrete problems, but there is little coordination among them to move the whole school forward.

Adolfo Perez Esquivel Elementary School. At Esquivel Elementary School, curriculum and instruction, teacher professional development, student support services, and parent outreach all are organized around the school's comprehensive literacy program. Teachers use periodic assessments aligned with the curriculum to monitor student progress and place students in skill-based reading groups. Professional development socializes new teachers into the curriculum and reinforces it for experienced ones. Regular grade-level and subject-area meetings give teachers opportunities to coordinate their work and address problems.

When offered the opportunity to write a proposal for an Annenberg grant, Esquivel's staff found other schools to partner around this literacy program. Thus, Esquivel was able to obtain new funds to reinforce what it was already doing rather than bring in new, disconnected programs. Moreover, Esquivel's principal worked with the in-house literacy coordinator and the developers of the literacy program to adapt it to the school's particular needs, including helping students prepare for high-stakes standardized testing. Both the opportunity to obtain Annenberg funds and the CPS testing policy could have pulled Esquivel's attention away from its central curricular focus—the literacy program. Instead, the school's leadership was able to manage these various influences to enhance program coherence.

Social Trust

Social trust is the model's second overarching support. It refers to shared confidence in the abilities and integrity of others, mutual respect, and personal regard. Social trust is crucial for school development.²³ In schools with high social trust, teachers feel that their principal respects and supports them, looks out for their welfare, and has confidence in their expertise. They, in turn, respect their principal as an educator. In high-trust schools, teachers and parents respect and support each other and students feel their teachers care about them, listen to their ideas, and keep their promises. Moreover, teachers trust and respect each other, communicate openly, and support colleagues who lead development efforts.

In schools with low social trust, people hold little respect for and have little confidence in others. Teachers do not necessarily believe that their principal trusts and supports them or looks out for their welfare. There is little mutual respect and support among parents and teachers, students and teachers, or among teachers themselves.

Oscar Arias Sanchez Elementary School. There is deep trust and mutual respect among members of the Sanchez Elementary School community. They have confidence in each other's abilities and can count on each other for support. This high level of trust does not mean that there is total harmony among faculty and staff, but because they have built a foundation of trusting relationships, faculty and staff feel comfortable challenging each other and openly expressing disagreements instead of letting them turn into personal attacks. This allows for serious discussion of complex issues that deserve to be considered from multiple points of view. It fosters reflective dialogue about teaching, learning, and school governance.

Considerable trust has developed between teachers and Sanchez's in-house literacy coordinator. Although the coordinator has no authority, teachers volunteer to have her observe their classrooms, critique them on their teaching, and work with them to develop high quality instruction. They turn to the

coordinator to share problems and ask for assistance. Such help-seeking behavior is dependent upon trust that the coordinator will be genuinely helpful and not ridicule or penalize teachers for risk taking or possible failure.

Summary

The Model of Essential Supports identifies seven aspects of school organization and practice that are conducive to student learning. These supports include school leadership, teacher professional community, parent and community support, student-centered learning climate, quality instruction, instructional program coherence, and social trust. We have chosen this model to frame and guide our study of development in Chicago Annenberg schools for several reasons. It has theoretical and empirical support. It has become a familiar and established guide for school

improvement planning in Chicago public schools. And, it is consistent with the types of development sought by the Challenge.

According to the model, movement from low to high states of development on these essential supports creates conditions in schools that are likely to promote student learning, not only of basic knowledge and skills as measured by the ITBS, but also more ambitious intellectual development. Thus, in our study of Annenberg schools, our primary task is to assess the extent to which these schools move from lower to higher states of development on these supports. We compare such development among Annenberg schools to development in comparable non-Annenberg schools. Moreover, we look closely and compare developing and non-developing Annenberg schools to discern initial lessons about how school development may be promoted.