Superintendents in classrooms: from collegial conversation to collaborative action: the popularity of using lesson study groups and other types of communities of practice for the professional development of teachers is on the rise. Ms. Rallis describes a unique effort to adapt this tool to the work of public school superintendents. (Connecticut Superintendents’ Network). Sharon Rallis, Jane Tedder, Andrew Lachman and Richard Elmore.

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What happens when a group of public school superintendents comes together to form a community of practice for the improvement of teaching and learning? Can the members identify questions of practice and then collect, analyze, and interpret data from practice in order to improve it? Those who have taken part in the Connecticut Superintendents’ Network have shown the collective will and persistence to do exactly that. (1)

Established and facilitated by the Connecticut Center for School Change, a school reform organization, the Network is grounded in a theory of action concerning professional development for administrators. All participating superintendents agree with Andrew Lachman, executive director of the Center, and Jane Tedder, its education program officer, that learning is both situated and social. That is, professional adults learn not through workshops but through multiple opportunities to examine real problems with peers. (2) And capitalizing on this social nature of learning is the concept of a community of practice—a professional group "engaged in the sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise" (3) for the purpose of learning and building capacity. Members work together to "test out ideas, critique one another's work, offer alternative conceptualizations, and provide both emotional and intellectual support." (4)

The Network's goals are:

* to develop superintendents' knowledge and skills to lead large-scale instructional improvement;

* to assist superintendents in developing distributed leadership (5) throughout their districts—that is, building a cadre of knowledgeable and skilled leaders who assume responsibility for developing their own practice around the pursuit of improvement; and

* to enable superintendents to build an infrastructure that supports the work of improvement—evaluation, professional growth, networks, and opportunities for collaboration.

As of its fourth year, the Network consisted of 12 superintendents who had been wrestling with establishing high quality teaching and improving student learning in classrooms throughout their districts. Six of the members had participated for three years; three, for two years; and three, for one year. Six of the superintendents were women; two were African American. Their districts were geographically and demographically diverse, serving more than 57,000 students and operating in locales ranging from postindustrial cities to affluent suburbs and less wealthy towns.

In addition to the practicing superintendents, Lachman and Tedder are members of the Network, as are Richard Elmore of Harvard; David Nee, executive director of the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund; and Sharon Rallis of the University of Massachusetts.

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This blended network of practitioners, professors, and change agents is committed to a process in which members go into schools to observe teaching and learning directly and then support one another in solving problems that they have identified through what they have seen in practice. The group meets monthly and focuses on a problem related to student learning in a particular school identified by a member superintendent. We visit that school, conducting 20-minute observations in several classrooms and collecting data to address the problem. After the observations, we meet with the school leaders to talk about what we saw.

During the following month, we meet to analyze the instructional issues raised by our observations, to consider the implications and potential solutions, and to make sense of what we have learned. Elmore helps focus the sessions and connects theory and research to practice; Rallis documents the discourse.

Here we tell the story of how the Network developed and how it operates. We also discuss what we have learned, both about the process of creating the community and about the role of leadership in improving teaching and learning in schools.

CREATING THE COMMUNITY

Year 1 (2001-02). The Network emerged from a serendipitous intersection of professional relationships. Several Connecticut superintendents who had heard Elmore speak wanted to bring him to the state to share knowledge about practice in a more personalized setting, while having their thinking challenged, stretched, and critiqued. They spoke with Lachman, who had recently arrived at the Connecticut Center for School Change and was exploring the delivery of an alternative professional development model for superintendents. He invited eight superintendents and Elmore to join him in a study group. The opportunity to engage with a set of highly motivated superintendents committed to instructional improvement and higher student achievement through large-scale system wide change appealed to Elmore.

The group began working in October 2001. Initially, Elmore took the reins by proposing topics, but he stressed that members of a community of practice must accept collective responsibility for how it should engage in its work. The expectations were explicit: everyone in the Network had to share the work, everyone had to do the work, everyone had to model the practice of sustained focus on an issue, and everyone had to base the discussions on the specifics of teaching and learning. Logistical details were settled quickly, and norms of confidentiality and membership were easily decided.

In search of a concrete focus, Elmore suggested the notion of "leverage points" (key components of the system around which people agree to work to realize large-scale systemic improvement) as a leadership strategy. He synthesized the superintendents' discussion into seven leverage points: resources, knowledge/skill/expertise, accountability, assessment, curriculum, capacity building and professional development, and structure.

The conversations in early 2002 were largely determined by the idea of leverage points. For the first time in the group's short history, exchanges between members shifted from narrations of events in their respective districts to shared conversations about how core instructional concepts are revealed in specific instances. The shift from the idea of common focus into the reality of group practice had begun.

However, a disconnect remained between the ideal of community practice and the reality of the Network's performance. Talk was often abstract and unconnected to the real world. To bring practice to "the center of the table," Elmore and the Center staff recommended that the group leave the comfort of the conference room and visit classrooms together. A site visit would be driven by practice oriented questions about instruction, and the direct observation would provide members with a shared experience. Follow-up conversations
would be data-based, tolerating only minimal straying from matters of instruction. Defined protocols would guide both the visit and the reporting of the observations.

Not all the superintendents were convinced initially. Indeed, few embraced the plan to visit classrooms and collect observational data. Some did not believe that they could learn anything important or useful from the proposed visits and were reluctant to offer one of their schools for the untried site-visit protocol. One superintendent stated that the real incentive to be in the Network was the opportunity to share craft knowledge with Elmore. Eventually, though, a new member who had only recently joined the Network offered a school in her district for a visit, and the group agreed to give observation a try.

The first site visit occurred in April 2002 at an elementary school in a small suburban district. Just prior to the visit, Elmore reminded the group to focus on "what we actually see going on in classrooms, not judgments we make about what we see." Just before the post observation debriefing, he reminded everyone to "try to stick to the discipline of responding to the question: 'What did you see?'" Yet by the end of the debriefing, it was clear that the superintendents were not seeing the classrooms as clearly and objectively as Elmore. Elmore's notes were precise—e.g., numbers of students doing particular tasks, verbatim teacher remarks, and detailed summaries of student work on desks. Other reports on the same classes were more generalized, subjective, and judgmental - e.g., "teacher used evaluative language," "students primarily reading," "a marvelous lesson."

As a result of the visit, all the Network members agreed on the value of data gathered directly in classrooms for informing our thinking about selected instructional problems. One participant spoke for the group by affirming that the site visit experience "brought us to a different level of discussion." The Network's inaugural year ended with an enthusiastic commitment to continue and to add a few new members.

Year 2 (2002-03). As the community of practice began to coalesce, Network members sought a means of formalizing the way we were learning to work together. At the start of the second year, the Center drafted organizing principles, structures, and norms. These Organizing Principles acknowledged members' common interest in learning, our eagerness to initiate and sustain instructional improvement, and our commitment to observe teaching and learning practices in the districts.

A crucial move toward the effective functioning of the Network was establishing group operating norms. These included agreements on attendance (everyone attends every meeting), involvement (everyone puts work out for discussion), respect for confidentiality (everyone agrees not to discuss sensitive information outside the group), candor and humility (everyone agrees to be candid and to admit lack of knowledge), and attentiveness (everyone agrees to listen).

The Center for School Change realized that the Network might want to capture lessons learned and make them available to the broader professional community. So Lachman and Tedder brought in Sharon Rallis to document the sessions, to provide an analysis of the seminars and site visits, and, ultimately, to assess the perceived impact of the Network's collaborative professional development on the participants and on the policies and practices of their districts.

Rallis' inclusion in the Network posed challenges of its own. When she was introduced to the membership at the September meeting, one superintendent was concerned that documentation might violate the group's confidentiality norm. Some others were uncomfortable about potential external judgment of their work. Rallis agreed to abide by the group confidentiality norms and, over time, became accepted into the Network. She attended all Network meetings, transcribing conversations but not entering the discussion. After each session, she provided discourse analyses to the Center.

The second year also saw four new superintendents join the Network. These new
members quickly integrated into the group.

Since reflection on practice is essential to learning and to sustaining organizational improvement, Tedder and Lachman proposed that school visits alternate with reflective sessions so members could have the opportunity to connect Network deliberations to their own districts. Since the site visits were the keystone of the Network's interaction, extensive preparation for each visit was essential. A complete observation cycle involved the following steps: shaping the "problem statement," preparing for the visit, observing and debriefing, reviewing outcomes, and reflecting collectively.

The superintendent whose district was to be visited presented a problem statement summarizing a situation related directly to instruction that the observers were to keep in mind during their visit. Examples ranged from a pattern of uneven performance results on standardized tests in an urban elementary school to concern about teachers' expectations for student performance in a rural high school to the impact of district wide planning on classroom practice in a suburban elementary school. The superintendent provided supporting materials, such as school profiles, standardized test data, and vision or policy papers to provide background for the visit. Members posed clarifying questions and became familiar with the context of the visit.

The observation day at the school began with the greeting, a formal opening of the day that took about 15 minutes. Over coffee and muffins, the principal welcomed Network members to the school, and the Center staff reminded all participants of the problem statement and reviewed the plans for the day.

Then Network members dispersed to visit classrooms. Armed with maps, visitation schedules, and observation sheets, they headed off in teams of four. Normally teams visited five classrooms, and at least half the group observed in the same room. They tried to enter the classrooms unobtrusively; no formal greeting was given or expected. During the 20-minute visit, each Network member moved about the room, listening to students and teachers and observing what was on desks, walls, and boards. They made notes on observation sheets.

Because discussion was to be grounded in data, the sheets encouraged observers to make notations and record findings under such specific headings as, What is the teacher saying? What is on the students' desks? What are students doing? The goal was to encourage Network members to see the instructional environment without filtering it through their own viewpoints. The notes they took were for their personal use during the debriefing; they were not collected or compiled.

The foursomes moved easily from classroom to classroom for about three hours. They headed to lunch and debriefing. If the debriefing went well, Network members simply stated what they had observed: "In the third-grade class, four of the students not working with the teacher were looking out the window, three were completing the worksheet, and one was kicking the chair in front of her." Since at least half of the Network members had seen the same class, the goal was to share all the observations on that class before moving on to the next one. Commentary moved away from opinion and toward reporting data-based observations and drawing conclusions from them.

Elmore's roles as expert/teacher and meeting leader changed somewhat as the superintendents assumed more leadership of the discussions. More frequently, he began to play the role of facilitator, reminding the members of where and how they could have improved their observations and connecting their observations to educational research and theory.

Both host administrators (superintendent and principal) participated in this session as listeners. This format was sometimes stressful since the observations did not always paint a positive instructional picture. The willingness of these administrators to open their
doors to the group was appreciated, and they were encouraged to pass on thanks to the entire school staff whose workday had been disrupted. Network members were keenly aware that, despite all efforts not to be intrusive, 16 educational leaders arriving en masse was definitely a tension-building event for each school visited. The host superintendent and the school leaders were urged to use the data from the debriefing as prompts for reflection and action, not as consultative recommendations. Before each meeting concluded, the group considered whether any patterns had emerged from the data that could shed light on the problem at hand or on the state of instruction generally in Network schools. This discussion set the context for the reflective session.

Planning for the reflective session generally required less logistical effort than for a site visit but no less attention to content and format. The Network member whose district had just been visited would report on reactions at the school and on any actions taken. The group had decided that superintendents who had previously hosted site visits would assume responsibility for leading the reflective sessions. By the end of Year 2, a predictable framework was in place for both site visits and reflective sessions.

At the June 2003 meeting, Rallis, who had been transcribing all the meetings' conversations, reported to the members on patterns of learning that had evolved over the course of the year. Her analyses revealed that conversations had become more focused on instructional practices and were grounded in observational data. By focusing discussion directly on the work, the superintendents were forming new knowledge about what was actually happening in classrooms.

Rallis' transcribed conversations also showed that the group members had gotten better at building on one another's comments and pushing toward collective understanding. By the May session, the superintendents were no longer using a series of independent comments to talk about instruction; they were creating new learning through the threads of linked comments. This fledgling community of practice had taken hold, and the superintendents enthusiastically agreed to move into Year 3.

Year 3 (2003-04). To broaden the diversity and reach of the Network, three additional superintendents willing to commit to the principles and norms of the group were invited to join. The Network now included 12 superintendents, as well as Tedder, Lachman, Nee, Elmore, and Rallis.

Even though the overall plan was to continue with the practice of alternating site visits with reflective sessions, the Center looked for a way to launch the year's work that would engage all members and not burden any one superintendent with hosting duties during the first weeks of school. To this end, the September meeting featured discussion of a case study concerning a large urban high school. The case study set the stage for the proposed first site visit to a high school in October, which enabled the group to consider how it could move from seeing what was happening instructionally to talking about how improvement could actually occur. As one member noted, the superintendents wanted "more applicability. How do we apply strategies back home? What we do with the data becomes critical."

As the year progressed, the group visited schools in four more districts, paying special attention to the questions of practice posed by the superintendents:

* Can expectations for student work be seen in class work and instruction?

* Are the instructional strategies, lessons, and assessments used by the classroom teacher appropriately rigorous and sufficiently relevant?

* To what degree do faculty members have common expectations for student learning and a common framework for instruction?
What evidence do we have that teachers practice the district's theory of action in their classrooms? The Network structure remained consistent. The only modification was to highlight recommendations to the host superintendent in the reflective session. During the post visit debriefings and reflective meetings, Network members honed their collective capacity to build on one another's learning and to create a meaningful community of practice.

Elmore's role continued to evolve. He maintained his status as teacher and communicator of the possibilities inherent in large-scale change. However, Rallis' analyses of the debriefings and reflective sessions showed that his role as process facilitator was being gradually phased out as the members expanded their own capacity to build on one another's contributions. The superintendents had clearly assumed responsibility for starting and managing discussions about the data from site visits and their application to various leverage points in district improvement efforts. When Elmore participated in discussions about the visits, his engagement was not unlike that of the other participants. In fact, as the transcript from one session showed, when Elmore did assert his observations early in the conversation, both the frequency and connectedness of the superintendents' comments diminished.

As the third year drew to an end, Lachman raised the issue of scaling up the Network. Given the positive reaction of the members to the group's purpose and structure, and since members had read Elmore's call for "good educational practice to move beyond pockets of excellence," the Center's leaders had hopes of extending this particular kind of professional development to more Connecticut superintendents.

Current superintendents were unanimous in their desire that the Network continue. "I depend on this work to help me with mine," said a typical member of the Network. However, the members did not support options for growth that would result in either enlarging the current group or splitting it into two groups. There was strong conviction that this group had just begun to learn how to work as a community of practice focused on instruction and how leadership is brought to bear on school improvement. "The work of the group has not developed to the extent that it has done all that we can do, so I think this group needs to stay intact," said one member in a viewpoint endorsed by others. The scaling-up effort was placed on hold.

WHAT THE NETWORK HAS LEARNED ABOUT THE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Over the years, an integral part of the group's work has been analyzing its own development as a community of practice, the processes it uses, and the learning that is taking place. The Network has come to define its community of practice as a group of superintendents and educational leaders, each working toward a similar goal (instructional improvement), who share routines, sensibilities, artifacts, and vocabulary and who engage in a joint enterprise of regular discourse.

After three full years, the group had developed a relatively explicit theory of action to guide its work. The basic elements of the theory are:

* Collegial work on instructional improvement requires focusing on an explicit problem. Specifying a problem of instructional practice connected to the district's overall strategy of instructional improvement is a key element in the group's collective discipline. This feature distinguishes the Network's approach from other, less explicit, less strategically focused uses of classroom visits or "walkthroughs." The problem focus creates boundaries for the observation and analysis and provides criteria for judging the relevance of comments and suggestions. In addition, it creates a strong incentive for the host superintendent to take action as a consequence of the visit and subsequent reflection.

* The classroom observations are structured by an agreed upon protocol that carries
across settings and visits. The use of a protocol fosters the development of a common language for defining and analyzing problems. Over time, this language develops in explicitness and depth - what we have called "grain size." While the problems may differ from one setting to another, the frame of reference of the group stays the same. Although the protocol has evolved slightly in response to concerns expressed by host superintendents, data collection and discussions at all visits are structured around the same protocol.

* Underlying the problem focus is the assumption that all members have a strategy of instructional improvement and that the Network's aim is to help improve those strategies. Superintendents who have not begun to frame specific activities throughout their districts to support an instructional improvement strategy are not likely candidates for this community of practice. On the other hand, such strategies are never fully formed, so the work is never complete and the strategies are always regarded as dynamic, changing in response to new insights.

* The work requires strong group norms and periodic reflection on these norms. These norms create the "practice" that characterizes the group's work. Superintendents relate to other members of the group in ways that would not necessarily be used in other settings. And the ways in which they relate to one another constitute an explicit, agreed upon set of practices designed to increase the effectiveness of their work.

* Among the strongest norms is the use of evidence from observed instructional practice as a basis for more general claims. Group discussions are fundamentally disciplined by such evidence. Evidence should precede evaluations and recommendations in discussions.

* In general, peers speak to peers first. The group's work is modeled explicitly on the belief that knowledge of practice and the improvement of practice both develop through disciplined collegial interaction. The advice of outside consultants is secondary.

One of the most effective means for determining whether the Network is accomplishing its goals of identifying best practices, solving problems, and building members' capacity for positive change has been to examine Rallis' transcripts of the meetings. The group has explored such questions as, What tone was set in meetings, and how? Which voices contributed, dominated, or remained silent? How open and honest were they? Were comments mostly blurry generalizations or tightly focused observations? What insights emerged, and what patterns of interaction contributed to the insights? The following are highlights of this close look at Network dialogue.

Over the course of the first three years, the superintendents had overcome the tension they had originally felt in giving negative feedback. Thus the level of candor increased. After the first school visit of Year 2, the members avoided specifics and were hesitant to be critical. A representative comment was: "Let's spend some time validating the positive things happening in that school . . . to bring them to the next level without damaging the good things they are trying to do."

Compare this remark with the following conversation, which occurred four months later, after a visit to an elementary school where teachers were implementing differentiated instruction. (7)

Alan: My first observation is that this is a happy school. But I have a question about the differentiation -- could teachers get the idea that differentiation means getting the children into small groups?

Bern: I echo his comments. I did not see what I would call differentiated instruction in either third

http://proxy.lib.iastate.edu:4060/ips/printdoc.do?&prodId=IPS&userGroupName=iastu_main&docId=A14...
grade. Children were rotating through the same activities. I was struck by the hectic nature of the class --there were no less than eight groups. The teacher was working his tail off running from group to group. He had no time to give more than five to eight seconds of attention to each child.

Don: I was struck that two students were sitting off by themselves and never had any interaction with any adult.

Ellie: Every group was doing essentially the same worksheet. It's not clear how the groups were determined. Differentiated instruction is not just dividing kids into groups.

This exchange illustrates members' growing willingness to critique and question what we had observed and to use our observational data to uncover the reality of the setting.

Over time, comments became increasingly detailed and focused. Descriptions of what members saw in class became richer and finer-grained, and judgments were increasingly grounded in specific observed data. Note the detail in the following quote drawn directly from a Year 2 transcript:

The class was dealing with the novel Roll of Thunder --I saw a number of kids role-playing, extemporizing. One pretty risky thing was making a white kid black and a black kid white. She [the teacher] challenged the youngsters to expand based on their own experience. There was interaction without being dependent on the teacher. Other kids were clearly engaged. On the flip side, she asked, "Have you ever been in a situation where you were humiliated the way Cassie was?" One boy told about how people in his country were ridiculed for speaking Latvian--I would have liked to hear her take off on that--but she pushed on.

By the end of Year 2, feedback was grounded in evidence, not mere opinion. Members asked one another, "Did you see what I saw?" For example, the following conversation is drawn from the debriefing following a school visit during Year 3:

Alan: The teacher was having them write a story. She did not give them the elements. They wrote it, and then she went around and critiqued - why didn't she go over what we want in a story? Some of the pieces were lacking, but I did not see how they would have known.

Steve: We saw that part--the "diamond."

Don: I saw writing in almost every classroom. Nobody was addressing things like audience. Basically prompt writing. That is what they think good writing is, the "diamond."

Principal: They all learned the "diamond"--we want them to be good writers across the board--what you need for fourth-graders is the prompt.

Ellen: That was not my observation--she was not following a script.

Fran: She had kids working--gave them a lot of signals and cues about what would make their writing distinctive - asked, "What am I looking for?" They gave her a bunch of well-rehearsed cues--right on task . . . but the actual task was not as high a level as what she
was making it to be.

As well as being based on observed data, the group's interpretations became increasingly analytical and interactive. Still, during Year 2, at least one person's responses remained unconnected, and a few members contributed only marginally. The Center's staff recognized the problem and intervened, reiterating the norms of sharing the airtime, ensuring that superintendents spoke first, and ensuring that all members had an opportunity to comment before people offered second observations. At that time, the group itself had not assumed direct and collective responsibility for the nature and process of the discourse. However, as the transcripts by the end of Year 3 showed, all members were contributing at each meeting, and seldom was discourse dominated by just a few. Frequently, members commented on how valuable they found the opportunity to talk and learn together with respected colleagues about educational research and instructional practice.

HOW THE NETWORK IS BUILDING LEADERSHIP AND CAPACITY

Transcripts from Years 2 and 3 provide evidence that Network superintendents are adopting the group's insights and activities to improve instruction in their own districts.

* Many report on their own efforts to visit schools and get into classrooms more often. "The work of the superintendent is far more intimately connected to the classroom than I had thought."

* Many are replicating this process with their own management teams. "We are having classroom visits modeled after the Network."

* One has scheduled visits for principals with another district. "I have them take a day off and visit another school."

* One spoke of his expectations of himself. "I have people in my organization who need to learn from me, and the way they learn from me is through my model and example--so I had to experience that myself--that is what this group does for me" Still, superintendents did identify some obstacles to replication in their districts.

* "You have to make sure it does not become a 'project.' You make it a way of being and operating--integral to the other items on the agenda. People in the district must make it a part of the way they do things."

* "People think the critique is saying something 'about me.' People are afraid, so they want you to stay out of the schools."

* "Part of the problem in replicating is us. We are seen as the ones who have the answers. Now we are saying, 'Forget that I am the boss,' and 'I do not have the answers.' It takes a willingness to expose yourself . . . to work together to explore answers."

WHAT THE NETWORK HAS LEARNED ABOUT TEACHING AND LEARNING

Another purpose of documenting the discourse was to examine what the group talked about in the monthly meetings and to identify any insights that emerged from the observations and reflective sessions. Three insights about the teaching and learning that members saw in classrooms emerged from the visits and discussions.

1. Classroom activities do not challenge students appropriately. In many classes, students are not engaged in learning through the instructional materials. Group members could easily see that teachers were working hard. While students were compliant, they exhibited little agency. One surprise that emerged in this area was that student
disengagement was not related to demographics. The following quotes illustrate the kind of evidence that can lead to such an insight:

* "The level of student interaction in the presence of text was nonexistent."

* "No one was asking the kids to generate the questions."

* "She spent a lot of time on the prompt. She had in her mind what the right answers were--communicated it to the kids. When do you give kids expression of their own voice?"

2. Teachers or support personnel in a school seldom share common definitions or understandings of an instructional concept or a strategy. The superintendents were not surprised at this lack of shared definitions, given that teachers are isolated within their individual classrooms.

* "Clearly, teachers need a lot more professional development about translating what differentiated instruction is."

* "We need some norms of practice--some agreement. Then you can start to address instructional improvement."

* "If there were collective understanding, we would have seen patterns; we did not."

* "The amount of prepackaged stuff seems incredible. It may be that we have taken that kind of decision making away from teachers."

3. Commitments of structures and resources alone have not proven successful in effecting instructional improvement. Teachers and administrators are challenged to make effective use of the various structures and resources that their districts may have allocated to support instructional improvement. While systemic efforts are in place, various barriers and disconnects impede overall improvement. For example, the superintendents saw that funding professional development serves as a lever for improvement, but individual initiatives or contractually negotiated restrictions weaken implementation.

* "I get the impression teachers work with a set of issues one at a time--a series of topics. What happens to the previous theme as they embark on a new one? No notion that we are working on a sustained problem."

* "We are saying teachers take responsibility for their own learning. But the problem is they lose outside connections--it's potentially isolating."

* "Absence of any kind of human resource system in education. We need to groom and train teachers--and we do not do that."

EMERGING QUESTIONS

The Superintendents' Network has become a true community of practice that explores instructional improvement. Both engaging in the process and sharing insights about teaching and learning have changed the way all the members think and the way we interact with one another. We have sharpened our observation skills, learned a lot about the teaching and learning that take place in schools, and struggled with strategies that leaders can employ to drive large-scale instructional improvement.

All of this new learning is prompting action. But the superintendents do not yet know whether this action has changed practice fundamentally in their districts. They
acknowledge acknowledge the need to link these new concepts about leadership that they have acquired in their community of practice back to the day-to-day work in their districts. The group's discussions reveal that there is still "much work to be done." Can members become accountable for change in their leadership practices and in the instruction in their classrooms? We are challenging ourselves to move to a new level.

Finally, the Network faces questions related to replication and scaling up. Has this group worked together so well because of the process and structure, or is it simply a unique set of individuals who are predisposed to growing and learning? We must ask ourselves whether the Network can be replicated and, if so, what will it look like. Stay tuned for our discoveries.

(1.) We wish to thank the current superintendent members of the Network: Kathleen Binkowski, Plainville; Christopher Clouet, New London; Mary Conway, Plainfield; Salvatore Corda, Norwalk; Elisabeth Feser, Windsor; Mary Jo Kramer, Darien; Doris Kurtz, New Britain; Michael McKee, Stonington; Patrick Proctor, Wethersfield; John Ramos, Watertown; Diane Ullman, Simsbury; Robert Villanova, Farmington; and former members Louise Berry, Brooklyn; Ann Clark, Bristol; Tim Connors, Danbury; and Mike Wasta, Bristol.


(7.) All names in this and subsequent dialogues are pseudonyms.

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