

# Building Distributed Leadership in the York City School District: An Overview

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Building Staff Meetings  
University of Pennsylvania  
April, 2015



# Agenda

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1. Overview: Goals of the original Annenberg and Archdiocese projects
2. Why distributed leadership?
3. What is distributed leadership?
4. Design plan and expected outcomes
5. Benefits to you and your school
6. Commitments from you and your school
7. Contact information

# Overview

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- Funded originally at \$4.9 million by the Annenberg Foundation.
- A 4-year project focused on 16 Philadelphia schools; 4 elementary schools in year 1; 2 elementary, 1 middle, and 1 high school in year 2; 4 elementary and 4 high schools in year 3.
- Written and directed by Dr. John DeFlaminis, Executive Director of the Penn Center for Educational Leadership.
- Targeted to the training and development of model distributed leadership teams.

# Overview

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- A second 4-year project funded at \$3.4 million.
- Focused on 19 schools (reduced to 17 after merger); 4 high schools, 13 elementary school in 2 cohorts of 10 and 9 schools.
- Written and directed by Dr. John DeFlaminis, Executive Director of the Penn Center for Educational Leadership.
- Targeted to the training and development of model distributed leadership teams.

# Overview: Goals of the Projects

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- To develop model distributed leadership teams and school communities in all schools over 4 years.
- To implement a targeted professional development strategy for distributed leadership.

# Overview: Goals of the Projects

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- To develop effective teacher instructional leaders and distributed leadership teams who can support principals and their schools in achieving and sustaining school-level instructional leadership.
- To implement other leadership-building strategies including professional learning communities and coaching to support the teams and achieve improved instructional focus and student outcomes.

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**Why distributed leadership?**

**Then**

**Now**

**Definition of distributed  
leadership**

# Summary Research – Why Distributed Leadership

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## Then

- Effect of leadership on school improvement
- Lone instructional leader
- Talents of teachers untapped
- Unsustainable
- Demands of change
- Need more leadership capacity
- CPRE saw patterns of distributed leadership in reforming initiatives

## Now

- High achievement schools attribute success to distributed leadership
- Leadership has more influence when distributed
- Greater teacher participation
- More effective retention and succession
- Important organizational and change outcomes
- Distributed leadership positively impacts student achievement
- More sustainable means of building a learning focused climate



# Why Distributed Leadership: Then

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Many believe and have written that:

“The days of the principal as the lone instructional leader are over. We no longer believe that one administrator can serve as the instructional leader for an entire school without the substantial participation of other educators (Elmore, 2000; Lambert, 1998; Lambert et al., 1995; Lambert, Collay, Dietz, Kent & Richert, 1997; Olson, 2000; Poplin, 1994; Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2001).”

# Why Distributed Leadership: Then

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The old model of formal, one-person leadership leaves the substantial talents of teachers largely untapped. Improvements achieved under this model are not easily sustainable; when the principal leaves, promising programs often lose momentum and fade away. This model suffers from what Fullan (2003) calls the individualistic fallacy.

# Why Distributed Leadership: Then

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The process of change required to move to the next levels of reform will be incredibly demanding. What is needed is not a few good leaders, but large numbers to make the extraordinary efforts required (Fullan, 2003).

# Why Distributed Leadership: Then

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“At the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) at the University of Pennsylvania, in their study of a broad range of school reform initiatives...they all hold one thing in common: They all implicitly distribute leadership across multiple individuals in schools” (Supovitz, 2000).

# Why Distributed Leadership: Now

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- School leadership has a greater influence on schools and students when it is widely distributed.
- Some patterns of distribution are more effective than others.

*Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris & Hopkins (2006)  
Seven Strong Claims about Successful School  
Leadership*

# Why Distributed Leadership: Now

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Schools with the highest student achievement attributed it, in part, to distributed sources of leadership (i.e. school teams, parents and students).

*Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris & Hopkins (2006)  
Seven Strong Claims about Successful School  
Leadership*

# Why Distributed Leadership: Now

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Some positive consequences of distributed leadership are:

- Greater teacher participation and engagement
- Better teacher morale and self efficacy
- Factor in organizational turnaround and improvement
- Succession and retention
- Improved organizational outcomes
- Improvement in student achievement

*Harris (2008)*

*Forging Connections: Distributed Leadership  
and Organizational Outcomes*

# Why Distributed Leadership: Now

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Research indicates that the quality of *leadership* is a *key* determinant of all highly effective and improving organizations

*Townsend (2007)*



# Why Distributed Leadership: Now

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Leadership is second only to teaching and learning in its impact on student learning.

*Leithwood, et al., (2007)  
Impact of Leadership on Learning*

# Why Distributed Leadership: Now

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Analysis of data collected from teachers and students in 191 elementary schools over a period of four years suggests that distributed leadership impacts positively upon student achievement.

*Hallinger & Heck (2008)*

*Assessing the Contribution of Distributed Leadership to School Improvement and Growth in Math Achievement*

# Why Distributed Leadership: Now

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Scholars now suggest that distributed leadership could provide a more sustainable means of building the type of learning-focused climate that characterizes high performing schools.

Day, Gronn & Salas (2006)

Leithwood, Anderson, Mascall & Strauss (in press)

Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom (2004)

Spillane (2006)

*as cited in Hallinger & Heck (2009)*

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What is distributed  
leadership?

# Definition of Distributed Leadership

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“[Leadership refers to] those activities that are either understood by, or designed by, organizational members to influence the motivation, knowledge, affect, and practice of other organizational members in the service of the organization's core work.”

*Spillane (2006)*

*Distributed Leadership Module*

# Definition of Distributed Leadership

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As a social influence process, leadership permeates organizations rather than residing in particular people or formal positions of authority. As a result, leadership can come from and be exercised by a wide range of participants.

# Definition of Distributed Leadership

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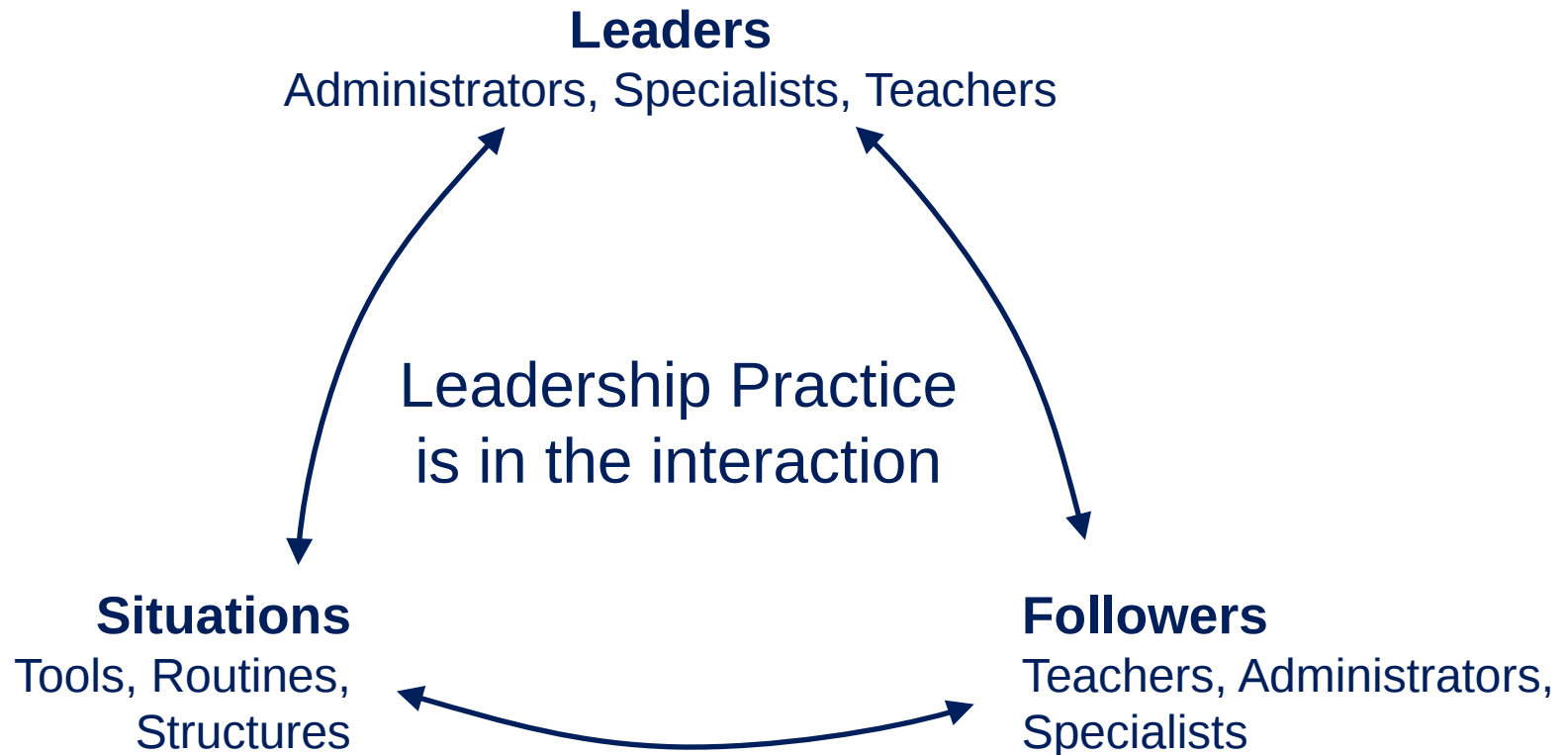
- Distributed leadership does not mean that “everyone leads,” nor does it imply the absence of formal leadership arrangements.
- Rather, distributed leadership is defined as an emergent property of a collection of individuals or an organization, a form of organizational capacity that is fluid and dynamic.

*Alma Harris (2007, 2008)*

# What is Distributed Leadership?

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## The Leadership Practice Aspect





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# The Design Plan of the Project

# Design Plan:

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- Spillane's work at Northwestern University and our work at Penn will guide the training and development of distributed teams (3-7 teachers and the principal) in this project.
- All will be comprehensively trained as instructional leadership teams, using modules designed and based on Spillane's work and developed at the Penn Center for Educational Leadership. Many are adapted from Penn's Mid-Career Doctoral Program, the Aspiring Principal's Program and Academy for Leadership in Philadelphia Schools (ALPS).

# Design Plan:

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Hackman (2002) found five conditions that increased the likelihood of effectiveness when a team:

- Is a *real team* rather than a team in name only
- Has a *compelling direction* for its work
- Has an *enabling structure* that facilitates rather than impedes teamwork
- Operates within a *supportive organizational context*
- Has available ample *expert coaching* in teamwork

He views the main responsibility of leaders as creating and maintaining the five conditions that increase the chances that a team will, over time, become increasingly effective in carrying out its work.

# Design Plan:

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Distributed leadership teams will receive training to lead schools in instructional improvement and student achievement. Some key aspects of this work are:

- Developing a shared vision of informed practice and supplemental training in best practices in instruction.
- Developing professional learning communities (focused on instructional improvement) in each school.
- Developing capacity for analysis and understanding of student work and data.

# Overall Project Findings

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- The DL Project successfully identified and developed leadership teams that were significantly higher functioning than were leadership teams in comparison schools.
- Principals and team leaders forged new working relationships that productively expanded the leadership capacity in the participating schools.
- Teachers developed leadership capacity and took on leadership roles on their teams and with their colleagues.
- There was substantial evidence of positive impacts on the instructional practices of teachers who were the targets of team member action plans.

Supovitz & Riggan, *Evaluation of the Distributed Leadership Project*, March 15, 2012

# Overall Project Findings (cont'd)

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- Team members worked strategically to change instruction through a variety of approaches and targeting a variety of areas that they determined to be their school's greatest needs.
- Case studies showed several examples of leadership team members exerting influence with other teachers and positively influencing instruction.
- The leadership practices of leadership team members are changed by the initiative
- Distributed Leadership increased leadership team effectiveness and culture

Supovitz & Riggan, *Evaluation of the Distributed Leadership Project*, April 16, 2010 and March 15, 2012

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# Benefits to You & Your School

# Benefits

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Over 100 hours of high quality professional development and support for teacher leaders and principals will be delivered by local and national experts and Penn faculty with a certificate documenting the extensive leadership training completed at Penn.



# Benefits

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All principals and teachers on the teams will receive a \$2,000 stipend for year one and \$2,000 for each additional year for participation in the summer training and all project activities.

# Benefits

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Leadership coaching and mentoring will be provided to support the teams in creating a distributed leadership school setting. Other school and individual supports will be provided including professional development targeted to identified needs.

# Benefits

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This project supports your York City School District plans and allows for vertical communication within schools *and* horizontal communication between schools. Elements of the project will support the current initiatives and contribute to increased student achievement and building professional learning communities. You will have many ways to share successes with colleagues on an on-going basis.

# Future Benefits

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Schools completing this work will be included in a nationwide network of distributed leadership schools where progress and developments can be shared.

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# Commitments

# Commitments

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Schools interested will be encouraged to obtain a 2/3 vote of agreement by the building staff. Principals, school representatives (where appropriate) and distributed leadership team members will be requested to adhere to the agreements in place.

# Commitments

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All participants will be required to commit to the conditions that support the initiative.

They are:

- A commitment to attend and complete all training for the Project.
- A commitment of 1-2 Saturdays and some released time throughout the year for follow-up training.
- Assist and help manage the ongoing development of the professional learning communities with a focus on instruction.
- Coach and support professional learning communities.
- Develop and promote a shared vision of informed practice.

# Commitments

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- Support and regularly update and share best practices in instruction and curricular areas with colleagues.
- Assist teachers who are not members of the team in analyzing, understanding and using student data.
- Support the principal and each other in efforts to improve the content knowledge and instructional strategies of teachers and, as a result, the student achievement in your school as well as other participating schools.
- Work collaboratively with the principal and other teacher leaders in promoting quality instruction for all students.
- One week of training in the summer.



# Commitments

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The additional commitments required from principals and assistant principals are:

- Oversee the work of the distributed leadership team in the area of instruction to maximize the team's effectiveness
- Complete a short monthly progress report
- Participate in training, to lead the selection of teacher leaders, arrange schedules and other activities consistent with their role in building an effective team
- Administer yearly goals consistent with the distributed leadership objectives.
- Utilize leadership coaches to support the distributed leadership team

# Commitments

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The additional commitments required from teacher leaders are:

- Completion of an application and interview for the teacher distributed leadership positions.
- To commit to 2-4 hours per week beyond or within the instructional day for the teacher leader work (in addition to occasional released time).

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We would be pleased to talk with you or come to your school, if necessary, to discuss the project with your faculty. You can reach us through the contact information on the next slide.

# Contact

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