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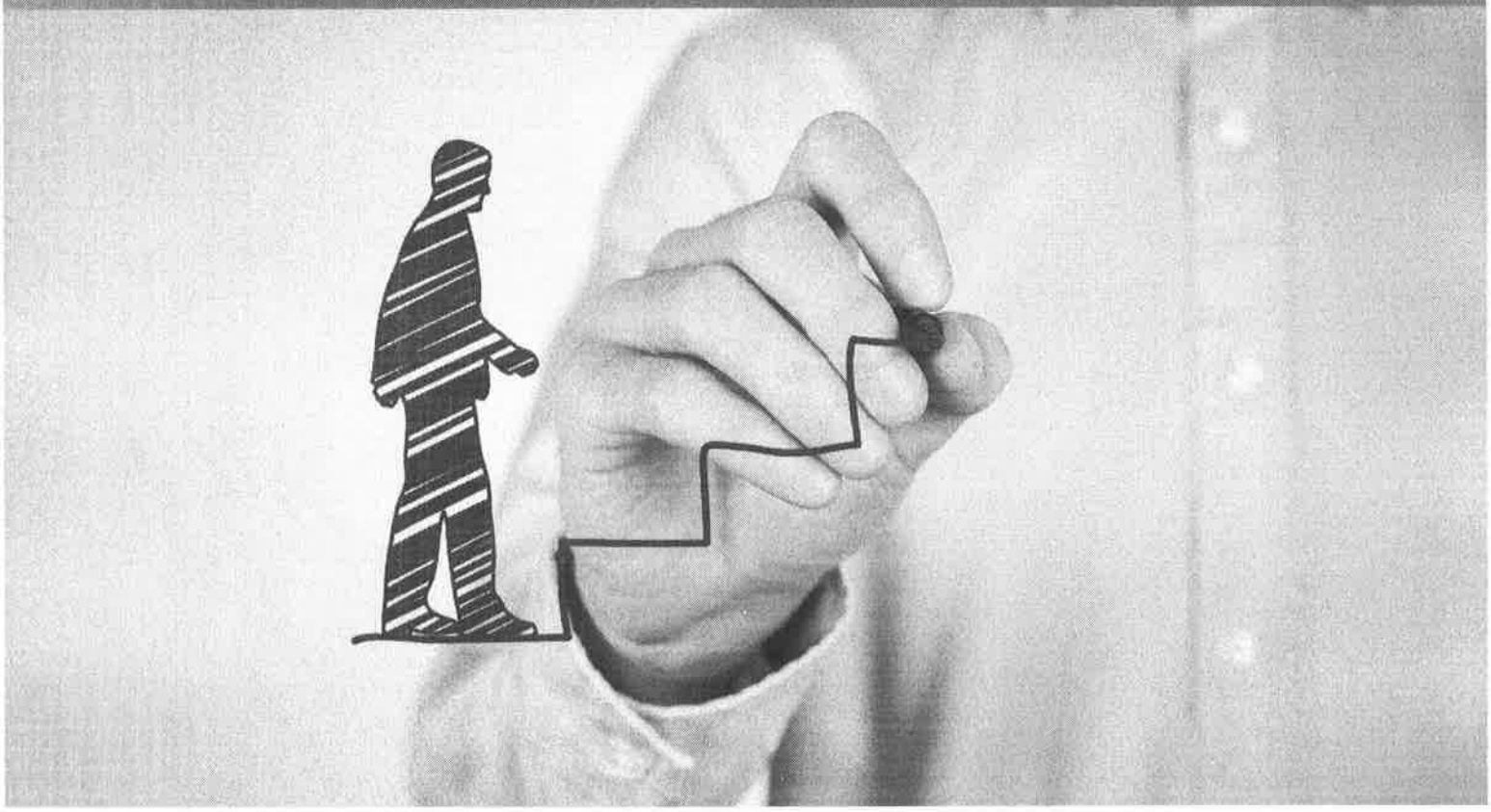

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Teacher Leadership and School Leadership:
A PROGRESS REPORT

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We have been studying and writing about teacher leadership for several years. One study of teacher leaders in Maine produced the Spheres for Teacher Leadership Action for Learning (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2012) which described all the ways we saw teachers involved in leadership. Teachers as leaders act in a variety of ways and roles with individuals, teams, and the entire system concentrating specifically on improving teaching and learning for all students.

We think of leadership as a function or activity, not a role, with many people engaged in "leadership" action (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Fullan, 2006; Donaldson, 2006; Hargreaves & Fink, 2005). School leadership involves the interaction among all the educators working toward a vision of the school that centers on ensuring quality learning for all students (Donaldson, 2006; Fullan, 2004; Smylie & Hart, 1999). Teacher leadership is dynamic, complex, and context dependent.

THE LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING FRAMEWORK

Lately we have collaborated with a group of international scholars on teacher leadership and presented our collective research in the **European Conference on Educational Research** (ECER) symposium in Portugal this past fall. Several of these colleagues have been active in developing and implementing programs using The Leadership for Learning Framework (LfL) which was created in 2002 as part of the Carpe Vitam Project at Cambridge University and is now called **Leadership for Learning: The Cambridge Network** (Leadership for Learning:

The Cambridge Network). Faculty of education members at Cambridge have described the projects and applications of LfL in a variety of locations globally (Frost, 2014; MacBeath& Dempster, 2009). This framework has helped move our understanding of the keys to effective collective leadership of schools. The principles of LfL include:

1. A focus on learning where everyone (students, teachers, principals, schools, the system itself) is a learner and recognizes the reciprocity of leadership and learning.

2. Conditions for learning that provide a culture of reflection and risk-taking that enhance thinking about teaching and learning;

3. Collegial dialogue that promotes sharing of values, understandings, and practices and exploring the link between learning and leadership in a variety of venues locally, nationally, globally;

4. Shared leadership that is fostered through collaborative patterns and structures of a learning community and through an understanding of the varieties, functions, and interactions of leadership and followership;

5. A shared sense of accountability emerging from a systematic approach to self-evaluation using evidence at every level in order to sustain the organization.

Fuller elaboration on the framework and activities can be found at www.educ.cam.ac.uk/centres/lfl/

ASSESSMENT OF LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING IN MAINE

We used the Leadership for Learning framework as a way to assess where there is more and less progress in support for teacher leadership in Maine. In highlighting areas needing more attention, we seek to further the goal of ensuring teachers and schools have adequate supports to lead improvement in teaching and learning. The table on pages 79 and 80 presents a snapshot of our assessment. There is certainly overlap in these categories, and efforts in one area resonate and promote change in others. This table is not meant to be comprehensive. Rather it offers some details about the framework and provides examples of initiatives or changes in structures or attitudes that bode well for teacher/school leadership.

Table 1 Progress in Realizing Leadership For Learning in Maine

Principle and *Assessment*	Aspects of the Principle	Examples
Focus on Learning ***Significant progress***	• Community of Learners notion is emphasized • Powerful learning experiences enhance capacity for leadership • Opportunities for leadership in such a community enhance learning	• The proliferation of instructional coaching • Community partnerships focus on literacy including Literacy for ME (Maine DoE) • Teachers examine student assessment data together throughout the year in order to identify instructional strengths and weakness and to adjust student assignment to interventions leading to differentiated instruction • Participation on Response to Intervention teams or data teams
Conditions for Learning ***Moderate progress***	• A culture of reflection is enhanced by supports and structures • Safe environments foster risk taking, coping with failure, and responding to challenges	• The structures of critical friends groups (CFGs) and professional learning communities (PLCs) support professional development and instructional improvement. Teachers receive training in facilitation to conduct meetings. • DOE Incentives to teachers to participate in the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) program.
Collegial Dialogue ***Significant progress***	• Active collegial inquiry focuses on links between leadership and learning • Educators work toward coherence in values and practices school wide • Examination of varied perspectives is promoted	• PLCs are a vehicle for teacher conversations about practice. • Ongoing teacher groups use protocols to help teachers zero in on problems of practice as critical friends • Almost all school systems are part of the Maine Learning Technology Initiative (MLTI) and taken advantage of opportunities for development and networking.

Table 1 continued on following page.

[Teachers] need access to professional development, including conversing and collaborating with other practitioners working on the same issues with the same students.

Table 1 Progress in Realizing Leadership For Learning in Maine, continued from previous page:

Shared Leadership ***Moderate progress***	• Collaborative activity across roles, subjects, and levels is valued and promoted • Structures support learning communities and shared leadership • Everyone is encouraged to lead/follow as situation requires • Shared leadership is evident in day to day flow of activities	• Legislation mandated a collaborative process for development of evaluation plans • Shared work of instructional leadership is more apparent in schools.
Shared Account-ability ***Some progress***	• There is emphasis on evidence and congruence with shared values • Shared approach to internal accountability is a precondition of external accountability • National policies are recast in accordance with school's values.	• Pressures of NCLB have highlighted teachers' and administrators' accountability for increasing student learning. School test scores and grades for schools put accountability front and center in educators' and citizens' minds. • Maine signed on to the Common Core so schools are moving toward proficiency-based learning through principles that include a focus on leadership and shared vision.

FOCUS ON LEARNING AND COLLEGIAL DIALOGUE

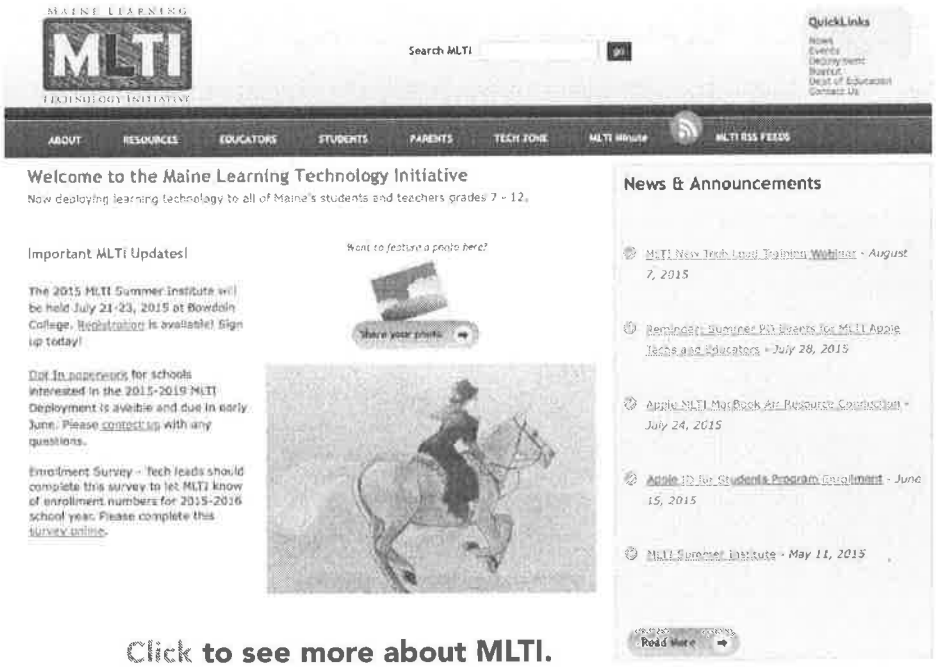
As the table indicates, we have seen significant progress in two areas: Focus on Learning and Collegial Dialogue. The two go hand-in-hand in that educators have recognized that a focus on student learning as indicated by scores on various assessments, especially those required by NCLB legislation, means that teachers must be learning too. In order to improve their practice, they need access to professional development, including conversing and

collaborating with other practitioners working on the same issues with the same students. The concept of professional learning communities of teachers, coupled with the focus on data related to student learning, represents a major step forward in ensuring leadership for learning in schools. The cycle of thinking, planning, implementing and evaluating based on the analysis of the results of their students' assessments is more and more embedded in structured time for collegial dialogue. In addition, administrators, with support from universities, have seen the value of instructional coaching and have created these kinds of positions in their schools. The Maine Learning Technology Initiative (MLTI) has likewise been instrumental in providing instructional support to teachers over the long term (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2014b).

CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING

Conditions for Learning is an area where we see moderate progress. We have described some of the structural changes in schools that promote a Leadership for Learning mindset. Cultural changes, though, among teachers are more difficult to effect. Teachers initiate leadership action within the contexts of both collegial, trusting, environments with largely shared goals and non-collegial school environments. However, in collegial schools change came about more broadly and more quickly. In non-collegial situations, teachers saw a gradual improvement in school climate as a result of informally nudging their peers toward change, yet teacher leaders consciously avoid taking a more direct role in trying to lead change or present themselves as "experts" (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2014a).

Time for both focusing on their own learning and having collegial dialogue



Click **to see more about MLTI.**

is still the biggest stumbling block to promoting Conditions for Learning. Educators are already overloaded with paperwork. Computers have been a boon and a bane in this development. The tradition in the United States that teachers spend most of their time working with children means that the aforementioned structures are squeezed into crowded school days, weeks, and years. As much as reflection and collaboration may be touted as the way people improve practice, it is not a priority in schools' schedules. In addition, helping teachers improve their work with each other by allotting time for leadership development is still pursued mostly by individuals. Rarely is it part of the fabric of a school or district.

SHARED LEADERSHIP

Shared Leadership is another area where we see moderate progress. Our research led us to conclude that there has been movement toward a greater understanding and acceptance of the notion of teachers as leaders in schools in Maine. Distributed leadership (Spillane, 2006) describes what we see in many schools as the interaction of leaders, followers, and the situation. Much of the leadership activity among teachers is informal. In fact, teachers say they see themselves as more effective as leaders if they are not anointed with any term that implies they have administrative responsibility (like department head or team leader) as opposed to informally helping colleagues work on their practice (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2012, 2014a). The egalitarian norms of teaching also impose barriers to teachers embracing formal leadership roles (Mackenzie, Jones, & Ribeiro, 2007). Instructional leadership is important for principals, and those who are most successful as instructional leaders engage teachers as individuals and collectively in the functions of instructional leadership (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). Teachers are closest to the "real" work of schools and are the ones most able to provide reciprocal coaching that is the basis of effective improvement of instruction.

Some teachers in our studies recognize that their work was leading change in their schools, but others did not see it as leadership; they felt they were simply doing their job. Many teachers express ambivalence about being regarded as "leaders," preferring to influence others informally. We wonder: Does labeling an activity as "leadership" hinder teacher involvement? (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2014a). The LfL framework indicates the need for "reculturing" of the teaching profession, that is, "producing the capacity

to seek, critically assess, and selectively incorporate new ideas and practices" (Fullan, 2001, p. 44).

SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY FOR STUDENT LEARNING

The area where we see the least progress in Maine is Shared Accountability for Student Learning across the school. Teachers generally are still focused on the students in their classrooms, which explains why they are eager to learn new strategies and seek out others who have expertise. Few teacher leaders in our studies feel responsible for the learning of students across the grades in the school (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2014a). Having shared goals contributes to the sense of collective responsibility and the sense that teachers in the school, together, can meet them (Louis, et al, 2010). Perhaps as schools embrace the objectives of the Common Core and make them their own, we will see the sense of responsibility grow across grades, schools, and systems.

As with many changes in education, we see pockets of progress as various reform plans, highlighting different aspects of teaching, learning, and schooling, unfold and envelop the world of practice and practitioners. In our research in schools and in discussions with graduate students in the educational leadership program at the University of Maine, we know there are many teachers actively engaged in leadership. We know, too, that teaching and learning are at the heart of their individual and collective work. When ongoing investigation and application of what is effective and what makes a difference for student learning are the heart of a school, there is greater likelihood that school leadership incorporates teacher leadership (Frost, 2014; Louis, et al, 2010).

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATORS AND POLICYMAKERS

In our conference paper (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2014b), we offered some suggestions for ways Maine and other constituencies could more systematically move in the direction of fulfilling the tenets of the LfL framework. One major point is that conditions for teacher learning and support have to be much more comprehensively and equitably supported. In Maine, there have been many policies that have led to mandates that are unfunded or underfunded so that school systems are often left on their own to make these state initiatives work. The time it takes to make these mandated changes is in short supply. And, tight timelines exacerbate the situation so that frustration and defeatism are often the outcome as opposed to buy-in and realistic

implementation schedules. Sadly, school systems that have moved ahead on some initiatives are those most likely to receive more funding, thus the gap between haves and have-nots increases. In addition, many of our state initiatives are never fully implemented because of lack of funding, guidance, and support. Furthermore, state leaders change course mid stream leaving educators confused and overwhelmed.

Countries that have demonstrated steady gains or leaps in student achievement have longer workdays allowing for collaborative work time for teachers, professional development focusing on both pedagogy and leadership development, and supports like coaching or networks housed and supported by universities or the department of education (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Stewart, 2012). Less time spent on testing and managing accountability systems could provide some of the time and resources. In the long run, though, there must be more of a thoughtful, concerted effort to provide more support to schools and teachers if the state is to realize the benefits expected by the various policies promulgated in the last several years. Partnerships between universities and schools and among schools should be established as networks of support for pedagogy as well as leadership development. Resources are limited, but cooperation and collaboration can stretch funding and spread the wealth of expertise contained in our state.

Just as Dan Lortie found years ago (1975), isolation and presentism are still characteristic of the teaching profession. Teachers have a strong sense of responsibility toward students in their own classrooms each year, but they do not generally express a sense of collective accountability for all the students in the school. Recent policies and their consequences have been moving teachers toward both types of accountability, but reluctance to take full responsibility remains.

Schools will need more time and thus resources to structure collaboration that allows teachers to discover effective practices for their school's students.

We feel that fundamental shifts in thinking about schooling and learning outcomes will result from increased

feelings of responsibility for the learning of all students. It will be an incremental process in that socio-cultural attitudes and conditions must change so that teachers in their collaborative leadership of learning in a school will take on increased shared responsibility for student learning. All levels of the educational governance system need to work together to redefine the professional work and role of teachers for the kind of schools we envision. This paradigm shift is not just for the teacher corps but for society as a whole, such that the enterprise of schooling is truly seen as a collective responsibility. Schools will need more time and thus resources to structure collaboration that allows teachers to discover effective practices for their school's students. The general public has to be willing to support what it takes to make this possible. There is no question that more money will have to be allotted to education for this kind of change to happen.

Many policies and expectations have set schools, teachers, and society up for making Leadership for Learning a reality. Shared accountability is foundational to proficiency-based teaching, learning, and assessing. But these must be seen as a communal challenge: they cannot be taken on by teachers and schools in a vacuum. Citizens have to be responsible not only for understanding what their governments are saying schools must do but also for supporting the expected outcomes with resources. In addition, all teachers and administrators must feel as if they are equal members who have a stake in improved learning of all students. Collaboratively learning and leading embedded in the notion of school leadership is where we are headed.

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