



INSPIRING A Philanthropic Partnership For Professional Development Of Superintendents LEADERSHIP

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A Philanthropic Partnership For Professional Development Of Superintendents

By Robert A. Kronley and Claire Handley

Inspiring Leadership captures how the pressures of accountability and a changing landscape of school reform require new ways of thinking about the development of superintendents.

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PREFACE

In 1996 BellSouth Foundation launched a \$1.5 million initiative to address the central role of school district leadership in assuring education reform in the South. It was a major departure from our traditional work in many ways:

- It was the first program directed to individuals, not institutions.
- It was our first major investment in an operating program without grants awards.
- It was the first operating partnership that demanded not just our funds but our personal involvement and management and, as such, it was a kind of "leap of faith" in ourselves and in our partner.
- And, it was the first time we engaged the talent and expertise of company executives rather than our products and services.

The investment paid off. We are proud of the evolution of the Superintendents Leadership Network (SLN) that has resulted from our initial decision. We are also pleased at the momentum of new and more focused district level improvement efforts that is now underway across our region. And we are made humble everyday by the courageous, energetic and always hopeful individuals whom we have come to know in this effort and who are the backbone of education leadership in the South. These men and women from small and large communities understand the immensity of challenges they face, challenges that only increase as the demographics and economy of the South change; but they remain steadfast in their conviction that public education must be saved and can still be a "way up" for every child to transcend the circumstances of her birth and to realize her potential.

In this report we are pleased to share with our colleagues and with the education field generally a summary of the BellSouth/CLSR Superintendents Leadership Network: how it began, how the partnership that is at the heart of it grew and informed the work, and what the 56 superintendent members say about it and about themselves.

Let me be candid about what this report is and what it is not.

It is a description of the development of a leadership initiative from a developer's and funder's point of view. Even more, it is a case study of "shared design." It does share insights gleaned to this point, so that others may benefit from them. It also is an unabashed argument for the central importance of district leadership – which, we believe, often gets lost in the dialogue about school and classroom level reform – and an example of one way to help district CEOs rethink that role in light of today's education challenges and with the help of new ideas from outside the education sector.

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This report, on the other hand, is not a final and definitive set of lessons learned nor is it an objective evaluation with hindsight to clear the air: the SLN is still very much a work in progress and the third cohort of members will be joining the Network in fall of 2001. This report also is not a summary of the education changes and student achievement progress that have taken place, or not taken place, in the 59 southeastern districts whose superintendents have been part of this Network for some or all of the four years it has run to date. Both of those kinds of reports are also important and we do not shy from them. But it is premature for final lessons; and, as for a set of case studies, it is our goal to provide that as a follow up to this report.

For analysis and the writing of this report, we are indebted to Robert Kronley and Claire Handley. Robert is a consultant to BellSouth Foundation who also served as a member of the design team for the Superintendents Leadership Network. As a member of the design team, Robert was integrally involved but he also played a bit of an "outside observer" role that proved invaluable both for the program and also for this report.

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Most important, we are grateful to our partner, the Center for Leadership in School Reform (CLSR). Many – in fact, most – individuals at CLSR became involved with the SLN in some capacity, but the major responsibility lay – and still lies – with George Thompson, President, and Judy Hummel, Senior Associate, who serve as the other members of our design team. And, needless to say, none of this would be possible without Phil Schlechty, founder, Chairman and CEO of CLSR, whose writings and trenchant insights are the basis for it all. CLSR and we have been through many ups and downs together in this program, but through it all an underlying trust and appreciation for each other have held the partnership firm.

Finally, we appreciate the responsiveness and confidence of executives within BellSouth who governed and contributed to the program. As fellow executives to the education CEOs, they shared their expertise and personal experiences on various aspects of business strategy. As trustees of the Foundation, they encouraged us in pioneering a nontraditional approach to achieving our charitable mission by sharing the best practices of corporate executive development with the education enterprise.

There are many lessons still to be learned about how new roles and strategies of leadership contribute to student achievement and finally result in fundamental change of the public education system as a whole. We are committed to staying the course and to sharing the outcomes of the next iteration of this initiative.

*- Leslie Graitcer
Executive Director
BellSouth Foundation*

FOREWORD

In 1996, the Center for Leadership in School Reform (CLSR) was invited to respond to a request for proposal from the BellSouth Foundation to help build and sustain viable educational leadership in the South through strengthening the superintendency. The Foundation asked that CLSR's response strike a balance between skill-building and networking and build in the best that corporate training and education training programs had to offer. As opposed to simply requesting a grant, CLSR proposed creating a partnership with the Foundation to identify a diverse group of thoughtful, reform-minded superintendents and to design a set of common learning experiences for them. In other words, we proposed a process of shared design.

In the beginning we wondered what we had done. How would CLSR maintain its uniqueness and creativity? What if the Foundation exerted too much influence, or caused us to compromise our values and beliefs? After all, CLSR is an organization with a strong point of view about reform, about the capacity of systems to sustain change and about the kind of leadership required to lead change.

Our early fears never materialized because the partnership was built on common beliefs and the strengths of both organizations. From the outset, the partners shared a commitment about the important role of superintendents in school reform. The partnership and the process of shared design led to the creation of the Superintendents Leadership Network. And, over time, it became clear what each partner could contribute in order for the work to be successful.

CLSR, founded by Dr. Phillip Schlechty in 1988, had established a reputation based on extensive experience in system reform, skillful facilitation and the development of powerful frameworks. CLSR is driven by goals that have resulted in a common set of reform activities, consistent with the beliefs that underlie the organization's work. This caused superintendent conversations to be focused on a common language.

The BellSouth Foundation, on the other hand, had also established a national reputation based on its knowledge and experience in school reform. It had the capacity to open doors in other sectors as well as within its own corporation. This resulted in superintendent conversations being focused on a common set of experiences.

BellSouth also made available some of the same developmental resources provided to its own executives. Connections were not hard to make in that leaders in both worlds are faced with transforming organizations that were designed to do something much different than what is needed today. Leaders in both environments must create, invent and inspire people inside their organizations as well as in

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the external environment. What BellSouth had learned in its transition from a highly regulated to a competitive environment was instructive to superintendents who lead organizations faced with increased competition for the hearts and minds of children.

What CLSR has learned has made convening and creating networks, or what some refer to as learning communities, signature work for CLSR. It has been said that a network is one of the most powerful assets an individual can possess. This has been the case for these superintendents who have shared stories and learned from one another about the challenges they face and the legacies they want to leave behind.

This is a network of superintendents who embrace accountability and want their districts to be more responsive. They are challenged by the need for continuity to make sure that the good work takes hold and sticks over time, unique in the world of school systems where the expectation is often "a new broom sweeps clean."

The lessons learned from this undertaking and the implications for the professional development for superintendents are significant. These men and women lead in a world of contradictions: we want higher levels of student performance so long as the system doesn't change in order to get it. We want change so long as the changes don't cause anyone to feel uncomfortable.

The report that follows, *Inspiring Leadership*, is written by Robert Kronley, consultant to the BellSouth Foundation, who actively participated in the shared design process, attended all of the Institute sessions, and interviewed each of the superintendents. This report is more than a description of the process and the partners. It captures how the pressures of accountability and a changing landscape of school reform require new ways of thinking about the development of superintendents. It is clear that there is a message here for aspiring and practicing superintendents as well as for those who develop programs to support them. In my opinion, *Inspiring Leadership* is an extremely thoughtful work about the development of superintendent as change leader for reform and accountability.

*- George Thompson,
President, Center
for Leadership
in School Reform*

INTRODUCTION

Education reformers are increasingly focused on the importance of leadership. Within the philanthropic community, this heightened interest is linked directly to foundations' concern about the substantial investments they have made in initiatives to improve outcomes for public school students. Among other things, funders have championed the benefits of specific curricula, embraced various pedagogies, supported educators in their efforts to respond to new standards and accountability mandates, and promoted collaborations among schools, educators, parents and communities. As foundations assessed this work, some came to believe that achieving better results for students depends to a great extent upon developing the capacities of educators to deal with the array of concerns that influence outcomes for students. They concluded that building new competencies among adults was central to improving learning for students. This belief led to significantly increased investments in professional development for teachers by many foundations.

More recently, philanthropic interest in developing and enriching the capacity of educators has been directed more and more to those who hold formal leadership positions in schools and school systems. The Broad Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation, the Ford Foundation, the Bill and Malinda Gates Foundation, the Kauffman Foundation, the Panasonic Foundation and the Wallace Readers Digest Funds, among others, have implemented or are exploring new initiatives to provide deep and rich learning experiences for superintendents and principals. Over the years, other foundations – Edna McConnell Clark and Rockefeller prominent among them – have grappled with issues that relate directly to the capacity of educational leaders to implement systemic reform and have made investments that affect leadership development. Foundation concern about leadership development has consequently engendered significant activity, both by funders themselves and by a host of organizations working with them.

There are several reasons why funders are focusing on educational leadership. Foundations have been at the forefront of the movement to promote teachers as instructional leaders. They have learned that new roles for teachers require and are sustainable only if reinforced by new understandings by superintendents and principals. Funders also recognize that leadership positions, as currently structured, are less and less attractive career options. Superintendents, particularly in large urban districts, do not last very long in their jobs. The salaries and perquisites of principals do not compensate for the additional burdens of work and worry that now come with the job; this is not lost on those teachers who, a decade ago, would have eagerly sought promotion to principal as the next step on a career ladder but are now hesitant to do so. Finally, the reality of standards-based reform and the extensive accountability measures that accompany the new standards have

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underscored concern about leadership. Issues of organization, pedagogy, skills and relationships, and their connections to each other, now take on a special urgency. Dealing with these issues necessitates new capacities – and new ways of developing these capacities – for leaders.

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Since 1996, the BellSouth Foundation, in partnership with the Center for Leadership in School Reform has, through its Superintendents Leadership Network (SLN), endeavored to build new capacity in a select group of incumbent school superintendents working in nine southeastern states. Along with a few other pioneering efforts, notably that of the Danforth Foundation, the BellSouth initiative anticipated the current surge of philanthropic interest in educational leadership. Developing and implementing the Network in close collaboration with a highly-respected school reform organization and interacting closely and regularly with a group of well-regarded superintendents have provided the BellSouth Foundation with significant lessons about the interests and needs of superintendents as well as about the design and delivery of a program geared to meeting those needs and interests. These lessons could be useful for other funders contemplating new or increased investments in leadership programs and for other organizations eager to design those new leadership initiatives.

The Superintendents Leadership Network, as conceived and implemented, is a unique partnership between a regional foundation devoted to education reform and a leading school reform organization. It began with the funder's desire to support reform-minded district leaders in their efforts to promote positive growth in school districts and to champion such reform and innovation across the South. It evolved into a leadership development initiative with a specific capacity-building framework that encouraged participants to lead transformative change in their districts and states. The network drew on leadership concepts from business, politics and nonprofit organizations. Many of the issues it confronted were rooted in the South's history but its activities employed the latest technologies and relied on up-to-date thinking about transforming complex organizations to thrive in a global society.

This report describes the BellSouth Foundation's investment in the Superintendents Leadership Network, the partnership that led it, the SLN design and implementation and, drawing on the experiences and perceptions of the 56 Network members, some of its results. The report begins with a look at the partners that created the SLN, considers Network attributes and outcomes, and concludes with recommendations for the next iteration of the program.

THE PARTNERS

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The BellSouth Foundation

In 1986, BellSouth Corporation created the BellSouth Foundation. Unlike many company-sponsored foundations, the new entity was from the outset, and remains today, devoted to a single purpose – improving education in the South. To carry out this mission, the Foundation relies on a small staff with experience in education issues. It also brings other corporate assets to bear on its mission: the expertise of company employees, the technology it produces, and the particular perspectives of a large corporation operating in a rapidly changing and highly competitive environment.

What BellSouth had learned in its transition from a highly regulated to a competitive environment was instructive to superintendents who lead organizations faced with increased competition for the hearts and minds of children.

Its corporate affiliation leads to another distinguishing characteristic of the BellSouth Foundation: a regional perspective. The Foundation has had the responsibility to affect change across nine states of the Southeast where the company traditionally provided local telephone service. A regional perspective means that the Foundation must seek partners, address issues and support solutions that cut across state boundaries. A regional perspective also involves more than attention to geography: it means understanding and drawing upon the South's history, its culture and its vision of a future open to innovation and change that will benefit all of its citizens.

To help carry out its mission, the Foundation schedules yearlong evaluation and planning processes every five years. During these "time-out years," Foundation staff reviews what it has learned from earlier work; seeks additional insight from grantees, education experts and corporate colleagues; and examines current and emerging education issues. The result is a new five-year strategy with a specific set of priorities and grantmaking guidelines. Three such planning processes have been held – in 1990, 1995 and 2000 – and have resulted in a distinctive operating style for the Foundation.

Beginning in 1991 and with greater emphasis after 1996, the Foundation has operated initiatives that expand traditional grantmaking; certain of these initiatives do not include grantmaking at all. In these initiatives, the Foundation operates as a convener and collaborator with educators and educational organizations to bring about improvements for students that go beyond – in scope, depth, long-term impact and sustainability – what might be accomplished through a series of discrete, unconnected grants.

During the BellSouth Foundation's review process in 1995, one lesson stood out and was repeatedly reinforced: classroom innovations, good teaching strategies, system improvements and other reform efforts were successful and sustained only to the degree that they were actively supported by leadership, regardless of whether the leader was a school principal, district superintendent, university president or organizational executive director. This insight spurred the Foundation to put a high priority on leadership development, which led ultimately to the creation of the Superintendents Leadership Network. The leadership initiative was planned during 1996; it began operations in 1997.

Through this initiative, BellSouth sought to add value in four spheres:

1 For school systems: by working with the best and brightest district superintendents in the region, introducing them to new skills and insights, and developing a network of their peers who could reinforce their efforts as they worked to build stronger capacity in their districts.	2 For the region: by developing a cadre of education leaders who might, together and individually, model and champion education reform and innovative practices, beyond their own districts.	3 For the BellSouth Foundation: by gaining new insights about how to improve student learning and system effectiveness that could be applied into other areas of the Foundation's grantmaking and initiative operations.	4 For the BellSouth Corporation: by developing closer partnerships with the CEOs of school districts in the region and, from the insights gained, crafting strategies to serve school districts with effective products and services that meet their needs.
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Center For Leadership In School Reform

In designing and implementing the SLN, the BellSouth Foundation chose to partner with the Center for Leadership in School Reform (CLSR), a non-profit corporation based in Louisville, Kentucky. CLSR was established in 1988 by Phillip C. Schlechty to provide guidance and assistance to school and community leaders in their efforts to transform public education. Schlechty had considerable personal experience working in school districts and later became recognized as a leading analyst of the relationship between education reform and inspired leadership.

By the late 1980s, it had become clear to Schlechty that public support for public education was faltering and that without identifiable and relatively rapid improvements, support would continue to decline – leaving schools and districts vulnerable to charges that they were unsalvageable. He had also come to believe that real reform could not be achieved by adopting a school-by-school approach to change. Sustained improvement in student achievement – creating schools that foster learning to high levels among all children – demands a systemic approach to reform. Finally, it was apparent as well that most districts did not then, as most still do not today, have the capacity to envision or implement this type of reform – a reform that ignores whatever is educationally fashionable at the moment and that challenges teachers, administrators, board members and all others connected to the educational process to reconfigure their roles in such a way that places student work first. Districts would need outside assistance to develop this capacity.

CLSR was organized to respond to this need. It created a program to develop district capacity that was rooted in educational theory but simultaneously drew on leading edge and practice-proven thinking about business leadership.

CLSR is characterized by a comprehensive approach to school reform. It helps school district leaders re-envision their roles and reorganize their structures to support excellence where it exists and to build the capacity to develop it where it does not. In most instances, this requires the districts to develop their own capacity to lead and sustain reform.

CLSR developed a series of beliefs to guide its work. These beliefs are:

- 1 There is an urgent need for dramatic improvement in the performance of America's public schools.
- 2 The key to improving schools is the quality of the experiences that students are provided. To improve the quality of experiences, schools must organize around the work provided to students rather than around the adults and the work of teachers.
- 3 Students are volunteers. Their attendance can be commanded but their attention must be earned.
- 4 The changes required to organize schools around students and the work provided to students cannot occur unless school districts and communities have or develop the capacities needed to support change – capacities that are now too often lacking in even the best run school districts.
- 5 Leadership and leadership development are critical to create district-level capacity to support reform.

Center For Leadership In School Reform

To this end, CLSR provides technical assistance to districts, helps them develop a customized work plan, and facilitates professional development in conjunction with the plan. CLSR staff have developed two frameworks to guide their work with districts – “Working on the Work” (see page 12) to assess and help design engaging and rigorous work for teachers and schools to provide to students, and “System Standards” (see page 13) to assess and build the capacity of districts to systemically guide and support teachers and principals in their efforts to create such work.

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CLSR linked the two frameworks to practice – to the choices educators, from superintendents to classroom teachers, make on a daily basis about what children will do – by creating a set of tools to guide implementation. The tools allow educators to assess their capacity to produce and support engaging and rigorous student work as well as to reflect on the work itself. What do adults believe about student learning – how children learn and what they can learn? What do adults believe about their own work with children – its value or efficacy? Is the district or school organized around student work or around adult norms or preferences? How do adults determine if the work provided to students is, in fact, engaging and rigorous? What are indicators of active learning instead of rote response? CLSR’s tools help educators answer these and other questions.

Its emphasis on capacity, its district-wide approach and its focus on the quality of student work initially made CLSR unique and demonstrated how an outside organization could both push and pull districts to reform. Since its founding 13 years ago, CLSR has helped district leaders across the nation make real strides toward creating education systems that nurture all students and push them toward excellence. It has done so not only through its unwavering adherence to its twin philosophies – sustained change requires a systemic approach and student work must be the guiding centerpiece of schools and school systems – but also from its conviction that, like districts, it must continue to learn, grow and expand its own capacity.

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Working On The Work

The Working on the Work (WOW) framework is central to CLSR's mission and its approach to reform. The framework grows out of the belief that the primary product of teachers and schools is the experiences – the academic work experiences – provided to students. To engage students, sustain their interest and enhance their learning, these experiences must be rigorous and gratifying. Schools and districts, in turn, must be organized around the work provided to students, not the needs or desires of adults working in the system.

The WOW framework holds that there are four primary “customers” of school systems: students, parents, the greater community and the system itself – each is invested in the work provided to students:

Students want work that is interesting, challenging and satisfying.

Parents want students to be happy, safe and to learn what they – the parents – believe they should learn.

The community wants students to learn things that are culturally significant and valued by the community.

The school system wants students who are engaged, who will persist in their work and who learn what teachers want them to learn.

With this understanding of the key stakeholders in the school system and what each desires, WOW lays out what superintendents (and the central office), principals and teachers need to do to ensure good and engaging work for students. It identifies the properties – both cultural and structural – that systems need to support schools, the resources and their uses that principals need to guide teachers, and the qualities that the work provided to students should display.

The work provided to students should drive the work of schools and of districts. Ideally, the work provided to students has the following qualities:

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| 1 product focus | 6 novelty and variety |
| 2 clear and compelling standards | 7 choice |
| 3 protection from adverse consequences for initial failure | 8 authenticity |
| 4 affirmation of the significance of performance | 9 organization of knowledge |
| 5 affiliation | 10 content and substance |

While WOW does not advocate a particular curriculum, it does assume that there must be broad agreement on and clear definition of what students should know and be able to do. Without this, it is nearly impossible for teachers to create the type of work for students that will lead them to the attaining the desired learning and skills.

System Standards

The System Standards evolved from the WOW framework. CLSR's technical assistance and philosophy toward professional development is guided by WOW and the beliefs which undergird it.

CLSR developed ten standards for school systems that have a central focus on student work, are willing to take risks and are inventive. According to CLSR, student-focused, change-adept districts:

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1 develop shared understanding of the need for change | 6 develop structures for continuity |
| 2 develop shared beliefs and vision | 7 provide ongoing support |
| 3 focus on the student and the quality of their work | 8 foster innovation and flexibility |
| 4 develop structures for participatory leadership | 9 employ technology |
| 5 develop structures for results-oriented decision making | 10 foster collaboration |

CLSR then created a catalogue of leadership competencies aligned with these System Standards – the specific skills and knowledge superintendents must have to design and lead systems organized around the creation of engaging and rigorous student work. These competencies are:

- Marketing the need for change
- Reframing problems
- Creating a sense of urgency
- Building a sense of community
- Forging compelling beliefs and communicating vision
- Organizing all district and school activity around the work of students
- Fostering innovation and continuous improvement
- Framing new roles
- Managing by results
- Ensuring continuity
- Investing in professional development
- Allocating resources (time, people, space, knowledge, technology) strategically
- Employing technologies as a transformation tool
- Fostering collaboration

The System Standards and their attendant leadership competencies enable district leaders not only to re-evaluate their own beliefs about education – about the capacity of children to learn, the capacity of districts and their staffs to produce work that encourages sustained and deep learning among students, and their own capacity to lead the development of such a district – but also to begin making this renewed vision of education real.

BUILDING A NETWORK

Both BellSouth and CLSR had learned that the success of various reform elements – stimulating creative teaching, utilizing the most innovative technologies, effectively assessing student performance – depended on much more than the merit or content of the effort itself. It required visionary and risk-taking leadership to encourage and support educators to undertake deep reform that went beyond surface attempts at change.

Network Design

Beliefs and Goals

BellSouth Foundation decided in its 1995 plan to concentrate on change at the K-12 school district level. In focusing on school districts, BellSouth sought to encourage the adults who make decisions about any aspect of education to place student interests at the center of their concerns. This requires teachers to dispel long-standing myths about which students can learn and which cannot and to improve both their content knowledge and their pedagogical skills. It requires administrators at both the school and district levels to function not as monitors or regulators, as habit and tradition dictate, but as instructional leaders who guide teachers to new approaches of encouraging active learning. It requires an infrastructure that promotes creativity, rigor and innovation and is guided by accountability for student success at every level.

Perhaps more than anything else, however, the transformed school systems that the Foundation wished to foster require a different kind of leadership from that traditionally found in school districts. BellSouth had learned that the success of various reform elements – stimulating creative teaching, utilizing the most innovative technologies, effectively assessing student performance – depended on much more than the merit or content of the effort itself. It required visionary and risk-taking leadership to encourage and support educators to undertake deep reform that went beyond surface attempts at change.

For reform to be as deep as the Foundation wished, it had to permeate all levels of a district. At the school level, uninspired leadership means that one teacher's innovations and effective practices will remain within the walls of her classroom. Her efforts to improve her practice on her own will likely be circumscribed by a lack of meaningful peer interaction, poorly conceived professional development and insubstantial feedback about performance. At the system level, a dearth of leadership means that schools must function in spite of district policies and structures, not flourish with their support. Without good leadership, best practices are not shared and most schools are mired in mediocrity, if not stuck in failure.

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BellSouth's decision to focus on district leaders came out of its understanding that districts are crucial to envisioning, developing and sustaining fundamental reform. Concentrating on leadership and choosing to develop its own program was an innovative and pioneering step for the Foundation. At that time only a few other funders were focusing on leadership. BellSouth's approach to leadership, moreover, set it apart from many of the then prevailing models of leadership development. At that time and now most professional development opportunities for district leaders, particularly those that occur outside of university settings, are often of relatively short duration, lasting a few days or even only a few hours. Many focus on single topics or on a continuum of topics, which may or may not be connected to the superintendents' most pressing needs. While these programs can be very beneficial – helping participants to develop management skills or limited knowledge in specific areas – they do not embrace fundamental reform.

Network Design

BellSouth wished to foster something different, something more fundamental. Even before it attempted to define the structure for the leadership program, the Foundation had made determinations about several key characteristics of the program it envisioned.

1 The Foundation's involvement would not be limited to traditional grantmaking.

It would play an active role in the program, drawing on its own experience to inform and participate in the design and direction of the program. BellSouth had spent time cultivating effective working relationships with many of the significant actors in the South. Its programmatic knowledge, understanding of systemic reform, and contacts – along with the opportunity to draw on the corporation's experience in executive training and leadership development – would add significant value to the new initiative.

2 Program participants would be superintendents who had demonstrated a commitment to reform.

The Foundation sought to interact with a diverse group of the "best and brightest" superintendents and expand their approach to leadership. In doing so, it hoped to assist them in accelerating reform and to extract lessons from their work that would be valuable in spreading reform to other districts. The Foundation decided, for its first venture, not to develop new superintendents, nor to rescue districts – and their leaders – from failure.

3 The program would breach the walls surrounding the education community and expose its participants to new ideas and new experiences, particularly those arising from the business community. It would rely on skill-building techniques used in business to bring modern decision-making and change management practices to bear in education.

4 The program would be established as a network. This decision stemmed from a core belief: that learning is not a solitary process. It requires exposure to new ideas and information, opportunities to consider and discuss with colleagues experiences in light of new knowledge, and chances to experiment with and reflect on changing practice based on what has been learned. For superintendents, access to this kind of learning community is particularly urgent. Superintendents are among the most isolated figures in education – within their school communities, from their peers, and often from the most current thinking about management and leadership. This isolation is driven in part by the increasing political volatility of the superintendency. Many superintendents spend the bulk of their time and energy defending themselves or their policies to school boards, community groups or state bureaucracies. As a result, their own learning and that of key individuals in their districts often fall by the wayside.

Network Design

Building A Partnership

The Foundation saw the program as a network of southeastern superintendents who would, in effect, learn from one another while sharing experiences and insights as well as pursuing common work. A network would provide a way to engage individuals from diverse backgrounds and unlike districts yet link them by their common devotion to reform. BellSouth hoped that a network would enable the superintendents to plan more effectively for change, develop better relationships with their governing boards, make better use of technology as a management and instructional tool, and hone their public relations skills. Underlying all of this was a vision of the network as a vehicle encouraging participants to become a cadre of leaders who could forge new paths to transformed systems of education across the South. A new group of spokespersons would emerge from the network, knowledgeable about reform in the region, skilled at advocating for new approaches to teaching and learning and eager to share their insights with others.

Creating such a learning community would not be a simple undertaking. At a minimum, it required in-depth knowledge of organizations and organizational change, substantive experience in district reform, and a thorough understanding of research-based best practices. In short, it meant that BellSouth required a partner. The Foundation developed a Request for Proposal (RFP) for an organization to collaborate in designing and implementing the new Superintendents Leadership Network.

The RFP was distributed to eight organizations with experience in conducting leadership training for educators. Six organizations responded. After considerable review and internal discussion, the Foundation chose the Center for Leadership in School Reform as its partner. CLSR was known to the Foundation; it had been a grantee and Phil Schlechty had been an advisor to BellSouth in its 1990 strategic planning process. The Foundation respected CLSR's work and shared its conviction that student work and student well-being should be the focus of schools and districts. It was also impressed by CLSR's commitment to work cooperatively with BellSouth in creating a Superintendents Leadership Network and its understanding that the design process would, of necessity, be iterative — all parties, BellSouth, CLSR and the superintendents themselves, would learn by doing and incorporate the lessons learned in the ongoing design and offerings of the new Network.

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Network Design

Designing the Program

The Superintendents Leadership Network consequently began with a shared understanding by these two partners that they were jointly exploring new approaches to leadership development and that the evolving design of the Network would reflect their experiences along the way. From the beginning, though, it was clear that the designers believed that the Network they were creating had an intrinsic value that was to some extent separate from the learning and knowledge that each superintendent would glean from participation in it. CLSR and BellSouth agreed that they wanted to connect outstanding superintendents from the region to one another and, in so doing, provide a safe space for a group of talented leaders to meet and discuss openly the challenges they face and their struggles in solving them. The Network would also link these leaders to others – business persons, social thinkers and political leaders – who would expose them to other ways of thinking about and doing things. The new connections and the mutual support that membership in the Network would provide would be reinforced by the recognition that would accrue to participating superintendents – the designers hoped that there would be new and positive attention paid to the work of educational leaders who demonstrated both the will and capacity to transform school systems. The work and insights of this relative handful of superintendents would serve as an example of what is good in public education and as a model for other district leaders. As a result of this activity, the Network itself would develop mechanisms to disseminate ideas about best practices, information about innovative work in districts, and viewpoints on policy and practice by a group of highly regarded educators.

The Network would, therefore, provide a sense of belonging, support, recognition and intellectual stimulation. These were crucial elements in what was, in the early design stages, an emerging theory of change that drove the content of Network Institutes. The designers shared and operated on the belief that the core business of schools is to produce high-content work that will actively engage students. If the educational enterprise is to succeed, students must want to learn and participate enthusiastically in the learning process. Understanding the need for work that will challenge students and committing to developing it are the responsibility of adults – school boards, district leaders, administrators, principals and teachers. The first and perhaps most significant step in reaching the Network's overarching goal of developing a cadre of leaders who could push the region toward transformed systems of education was to build the capacity of participating superintendents to organize their districts around strategies to improve student work, leading to greater student learning and better outcomes for them.

Organizing districts around student work meant more than mechanical attempts to revise curricula. It meant developing a student-centered approach to all aspects of education: changing how governing boards understand practice and deal with policy, how central office staff think about tasks that may at first seem unrelated to instruction and learning, how building leaders set a tone for what happens in schools and interact with others, and how teachers conceive and implement their work.

Building leadership capacity around a framework designed to promote more interesting and challenging student work became the common point of entry for superintendents to deal with fundamental questions of systemic reform. The Network would provide a means for individuals who were isolated – from their peers and from some of the more novel and exciting ideas about changing complex systems – to learn from and support each other while grappling with new ideas in education, business, culture and policy. Just as individuals were isolated, so too is the field in which they work. By treating superintendents as leaders, the SLN would connect them to ideas, issues and ways of thinking that were familiar to other leaders, regardless of the professions in which they worked.

The work of these superintendents would serve as an example of what is good in public education and as a model for other district leaders.

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Network Design

The need to build capacity, overcome isolation, stimulate new thinking and build future leadership for the region informed the design of the Network and its activities. The designers were aware that implementing an approach that centered on these elements faced significant obstacles. BellSouth and CLSR were focusing on long-term change in how systems could be organized to encourage deeper student learning and how leaders functioned in these systems. Yet superintendents had little encouragement to take a similar perspective. As local leaders, superintendents had long been concerned with immediate issues – bond referenda, the composition of the cheerleading squad, personnel assignments and resource deployment, the venue of and entertainment for the senior prom, technology investments and desegregation strategies, among them – that varied significantly in their importance and relevance to instruction and learning, but were perceived as crucially important to concerned constituencies. Their relations with governing board members, critical to any stability in the superintendency, depended on resolving today's problems as opposed to developing tomorrow's vision. Compounding these local pressures, states' recent embrace of new educational standards and related accountability measures, while welcomed by many reform-minded superintendents, put increased pressure on these leaders to concentrate on short-term results.

These and other issues that superintendents confront underscore the fact that the school superintendency today is caught up in contradictions. Twenty-first century superintendents have inherited systems that were in large part a product of nineteenth century needs. Superintendents must develop strategies and tools to enable their districts to think about the future, not respond to the past. In doing so, superintendents are caught between state mandates, local needs and cultural expectations. Districts are creatures of the state, and state policy often restricts local leaders from implementing practices that will best meet the unique concerns of parents and others in the community who are influential of their districts. In understanding these concerns superintendents again feel the push and pull of conflicting interests – their role casts them as both instructional and community leaders, positions that are often difficult to reconcile.

These considerations directly affected thinking about the design of the Network. While CLSR's approach, refined from years of on the ground experience working in districts, was sensitive to the contradictions in the superintendency, it emphasized, through the reliance on the Working on the Work framework, the development of a vision that required superintendents to put learning first. As the Network evolved, it became apparent that participants' experience would be enhanced and the WOW framework expanded both by integrating other kinds of skill-building sessions into Network offerings and by inviting outside experts to meet with participants in discussions of issues related to their work. As a result, the designers agreed that the Network would host hands-on sessions on such skills as dealing with the media, marketing and brand management, and the use of technology by leaders. It would also expose superintendents to prominent education reformers from the nine states, governors' education policy advisers, and leaders from a variety of businesses.

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Network Design

Choosing Participants

The designers agreed that participation in the Network would be by invitation only. Thus, no application was required for membership in the Network. Instead, designers engaged in an extensive information-gathering process to choose the first cohort of participants. BellSouth and CLSR talked with a wide range of individuals – business leaders, school reformers, academics, observers of and commentators on education reform – to gather recommendations about who was perceived as among the most reform-minded leaders in the region. As a result, the designers identified a select group of superintendents who had shown clear evidence of and had been recognized for a strong commitment to reforming education. To emphasize the significance of their selection, superintendents were invited to participate in the Network by the BellSouth Corporation's state president in the state where their district was located.

Ultimately, the initial cohort was comprised of 29 reform-minded superintendents from the nine states served by BellSouth – Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee. They were drawn from rural, suburban and urban districts and from districts that ranged from more than 100,000 students to those that served just a few thousand students. Participating superintendents reflected the growing diversity of students in the region and included leading female and minority superintendents. (See Appendix A for a list of superintendents in each cohort and their districts.)

The Network was originally designed to run in cycles, with a new group of participants entering after two years as the older cohort departed. In the middle of the Network's second year, many superintendents from the initial cohort, believing that there was much more to learn and to gain from continued active participation, requested that the Network design be modified so that they might continue their involvement in more than name only. BellSouth and CLSR agreed. A second cohort of 27 superintendents was selected and met for a series of orientation sessions. The cohorts were then combined, with special activities geared to each cohort. Superintendents from the first cohort who opted not to continue active participation were designated associate members, which applied also to those Network members who had moved out of the region or had left the superintendency.

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Candidate Criteria

Demonstrated Commitment to Progressive District Reform. Evidence of a belief that the status quo in student achievement is not acceptable, coupled with a record of system-wide improvement strategies in place to address this and the moral courage to follow through during tough times.

Respect by Peers. A reputation among fellow superintendents and other educators as a thoughtful, smart, creative and innovative leader; the potential to influence peers in the future.

Regional Perspective. A willingness to think more broadly and more long-term about school reform than a single district; a desire to act on behalf of the future of public education as a whole.

A Learner. A readiness to interact with and learn from others; openness to new strategies and to ideas beyond the realm of education; absence of self-satisfaction.

Time. A willingness, with the board's agreement, to commit the required time to the Network.

Mid-Career. With more than one – two years' experience as a superintendent but not ready to retire soon; likely to continue as an education leader for the foreseeable future.

Network Design

Organizing the Institutes

At Institutes, the superintendents also considered the social and economic trends of the preceding decades that had altered the context in which schools operate, placed new demands on schools and given rise to myths about education.

The cornerstone activity of the Network was three annual Institutes, each held over several days. CLSR, through their BellSouth Foundation grant, covered all participant costs for the Institutes except travel, which was borne by the superintendents. Participation was further supported by extensive use of technology, including a private website and a listserv that allowed participants to communicate regularly with their colleagues and with CLSR and BellSouth staff. BellSouth also sponsored additional skill-building activities for members, such as media training, and other convenings that linked interested superintendents to other Foundation-supported networks in health and education, teacher education, state reform activity and technology strategies. In this way, the designers were able to extend regularly participants' work beyond their districts and beyond the SLN offerings.

The tenor of the Institutes was set at the first one, held in October 1997. At that Institute, Network participants were not only introduced to each other and to CLSR and BellSouth staff, they began developing the environment in which they would convene and collaborate. Participants worked together to outline the norms – moral, conventional, aesthetic and technical – by which they would interact.

Institute sessions were centered around the System Standards and the Working on the Work frameworks. At the first Institute, participants began exploring what they believed to be the purpose of public education and their role in fulfilling that purpose. They examined what it means to lead structural and cultural change in districts and why change at the district level is essential to changed and improved practice – the work provided to students – at the school level. The superintendents also considered the social and economic trends of the preceding decades that had altered the context in which schools operate, placed new demands on schools and given rise to myths about education – all of which have permeated policy deliberations and public debate about public education and its future. Participants undertook these through a variety of activities including small and large group conversations and exercises, individual reflections, presentations and readings. This format continued through subsequent Institutes.

Principles: Even more important, participants began collectively to define principles, which would guide the Network and their involvement in it, as well as their work in their districts. Developed over several Institutes, these principles are:

Educational leadership must be dedicated primarily to improving student learning; all students can and should be learning more than they now are. Schools and districts consequently must be organized around the work of students.

Effective education will enable our students to improve their quality of life, support economic growth and invigorate our democratic institutions.

Efforts to improve education in the region must continue to deal with unique issues of race and class; it is only by confronting the legacy of the past that we will be able to build a brighter future for all.

Educational leaders must create and communicate a compelling vision of transformed educational systems and institutions. These leaders must also inspire others to pursue that vision and to develop with them the capacity to realize it.

Education is not solely the province of educators. Effective educational leaders will develop strategic alliances and will collaborate with others – particularly business and civic leaders – to build support for reform.

Network Design

Organizing the Institutes

The work that the participants began at the first Institute – taking ownership of their experiences in the Network, developing collaboratively the principles that would guide their participation in it, defining the need for change, building a shared vision of what change should look like, and seeking new opportunities to learn especially outside of the traditional boundaries of the education community – was a model for a change process that they might adapt to their own districts. The focus of the work and the spirit that drove it at the first Institute continued through subsequent ones.

Since its first meeting, the Network has held eleven additional Institutes, each at a different location in the South – three in each year of operation. The agendas at each have been guided by the WOW and System Standards frameworks developed by CLSR. The frameworks have also led to other, more topical, explorations.

Discussions and presentations have included, among other topics:

Building community in a changing landscape

Understanding the past to focus on the future

Bringing issues of race to the forefront

Framing problems across disciplines and sectors

Marketing change

Employing technology to improve the core work of schools

Measuring student engagement

Facilitating conversations with teachers about student work

Developing change agents

Understanding and influencing how the public perceives public schools

Relating to the media

Supporting innovation

Connecting to education policymakers

Collaborating with education reformers

Continuity and succession-planning

Branding

Principal development

New definitions of leadership

Each Institute also has included site visits to businesses and community institutions; these have helped to illustrate themes of the agenda and/or provide illuminating examples of organizations that embrace change and innovation. Presenters at Institutes have included authors, prominent social thinkers, community and political leaders, journalists and business executives, as well as educators.

A list of all Institutes, with their dates, locations and presenters, can be found in Appendix B.

Network Attributes

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hen BellSouth and CLSR began their planning, each had ideas about goals for the Network and an understanding of what it should accomplish. They did not, though, have a predetermined vision of how the program should look and what its specific components – structure, detailed curriculum, etc. – might be. As planning continued and as the SLN became less of an idea and more of a reality brought about by a group of accomplished individuals working together, it became apparent that the Network was infused with certain attributes that have shaped it and made it unique.

The Superintendents Leadership Network is:

Designed and implemented collaboratively;

Rooted in both theory and practice;

Flexible and pragmatic;

A learning community;

Able to reach beyond the field of education for new ideas and perspectives;

Focused on the region;

Devoted to inculcating technological proficiency in participants.

Network Attributes

Collaboratively Designed

BellSouth and CLSR have collaborated on both the design and implementation of the Network. Each brings different, but complementary, strengths to the enterprise. CLSR has proven expertise in working on the ground with district leaders; its framework and approach have received recognition and acceptance among observers of and participants in school reform.

Over the years, the BellSouth Foundation has become a respected player in school reform activities in the South; it is known for a hands-on and informed approach in funding regional educational issues.

While the organizations had worked together in the past, the nature of the new enterprise required a much deeper involvement with each other than that found in a typical grantor-grantee relationship. The Network design team consisted of two representatives from each organization. The team has met regularly and at frequent intervals throughout the program. As the program evolved and design questions became more focused, the design team would occasionally expand to include other representatives from the designers and superintendents themselves.

As planning for the Network evolved, so too did the roles of each partner. CLSR was responsible for presenting the Working on the Work framework and a host of related capacity-building experiences, including site visits to leading edge enterprises based in the locales where the Institutes took place. CLSR staff designed and presented these exercises and facilitated discussions about them. At the same time, BellSouth provided other types of skill-building experiences and brought individuals from fields other than education – business experts, academics, media representatives, writers and regional leaders – to the Institutes. It also sought to connect participants with other aspects of the Foundation's as well as the Corporation's work. BellSouth and CLSR together identified political, social and cultural issues – particularly those with special resonance in the South – that superintendents could connect to reform efforts in districts. One outgrowth of this was a series of readings and discussions with authors and journalists about the context in which superintendents try to lead reform.

While BellSouth and CLSR often divided tasks, the line that separated them was never fixed. Like planning, responsibility was shared. This meant that each party had to pay considerable attention to its interaction with the other and that perceptions needed to be explained, nuances understood and divergent viewpoints presented without rancor. In creating a safe space for superintendents to learn, the designers first had to create – and continually nurture – a similar space of their own.

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Network Attributes

Rooted in Theory and Practice

The CLSR frameworks and standards gave special coherence to the Network Institutes. For the duration of the program, CLSR's approach subsumed an evolving theory of effective educational practice, which it was testing in districts throughout the country at the same time the Network was operating. What was tested in these districts was shared with participants, refined and tested again in the SLN and the outside districts. Observing this and drawing on their own experiences, some superintendents contracted with CLSR for special sessions in Louisville for their staffs; others invited CLSR to work in their districts. These relationships, which took place outside of the Network auspices, enabled superintendents to pursue Network concepts more deeply. They also allowed CLSR to focus on specific issues that confronted individual leaders and provided opportunity for both governing boards and staff to be exposed to CLSR's approach. The iterative nature of the Institutes also enabled CLSR to begin to develop and to work with superintendents to test tools that could be used by district personnel to measure progress toward meeting system standards.

Flexible and Pragmatic

BellSouth and CLSR were keenly aware that the type of reform they sought to promote would not come quickly nor would it follow a well-defined, clearly visible path.

BellSouth and CLSR were keenly aware that the type of reform they sought to promote would not come quickly nor would it follow a well-defined, clearly visible path. Schools and school systems are complex institutions with closely-held beliefs about their roles and how they ought to function. They operate in and must respond to shifting social, political and economic environments. Any initiative that sought change yet did not take this into account – which could not respond or help participants respond to resistance to change or to outside pressures – would have limited value to the participants. The SLN understood this – it adapted to participants' expressed needs and accepted that progress is not always a forward-moving process. Sometimes it requires a move to the side or even a step backwards.

Originally, Network designers assumed that much could be accomplished by superintendents working in state teams. Bound by state policies and mandates, superintendents would, in this formulation, band together to deal with common problems and proffer collective solutions to statewide educational issues. Segments of early Institutes were devoted to state work, meetings were held and ideas were shared electronically. Analysis by the designers and feedback from the participants, however, indicated that the state-team approach was cumbersome and not meeting participants' needs. Diversity among districts, busy schedules and superintendents' need to focus on building district capacity precluded the intense, regular collaboration that effective state work demanded. The state teams were dropped and broader discussions in the Institutes about policy issues and approaches were expanded.

Working with superintendents, the designers were also constantly balancing program offerings between critical thinking and personal skill-building. The initial focus of the Network was on the former. Requests from superintendents along with BellSouth's willingness to bring corporate resources to bear on such issues as technology, marketing and media relations, changed the equation and supplementary personal skill-building sessions, outside the Institute framework, were made available to interested superintendents.

Perhaps the greatest example of the flexible and pragmatic nature of the Network was the change in how its membership would be structured. At the virtual insistence of many participants, members of the first cohort were invited to remain as active members of the Network after the two-year cycle had run its course. A category of associate members, for superintendents who found that they could no longer participate regularly, was also created.

Network Attributes

A Learning Community

Many superintendents function in isolation both within their own school communities and from their professional peers. In creating the leadership program as a network, BellSouth and CLSR sought to address this isolation. Its aim, however, in bringing together a group of professionals with similar commitment to and shared goals toward reform in education extended beyond addressing isolation. The Network was a community where participants were not only learners but also teachers. The regularity of the Institutes, combined with the limited size of the cohorts, generated a feel of intimacy among participants. This enabled them to discuss their personal feelings about their work. It also provided them with an opportunity to examine critically and discuss openly the components of systemic reform and their role in bringing it about that few had elsewhere. Participants pushed each other's thinking about issues most relevant to change and, in the process, expanded their own beliefs and practice. Superintendents learned from each other, exchanging ideas and materials, and sometimes visited one another's district. Peer learning became embedded in the fabric of the SLN; this differentiated it from the fleeting and irregular contacts that superintendents have at such events as meetings of professional associations.

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Reaching Beyond Education for New Ideas

As educators are often isolated from each other, so too is the education community as a whole often isolated from new ideas and new practices emerging in other sectors that, even if not originally conceived to do so, could address challenges in education. The Network deliberately exposed participants to leading-edge ideas in fields outside of education, encouraging them to learn new approaches for framing problems as well as new ways of thinking about and motivating change. Many non-education books were read and discussed, and all members were given a subscription to *Fast Company* magazine.

Over the course of the Network, participants have met with senior executives and key leaders from many spheres and organizations, in addition to BellSouth. These include: CNN, Disney, the University of Alabama at Birmingham Medical Center, NationsBank, Ingalls Shipping, NASA and the National Oceanographic Center, Mississippi Power and DuPont. Ronald Heifetz, of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, provided an approach to leadership that has been tested with CEOs of major corporations. Participants were also connected to social and political leaders – including William Winter, former Governor of Mississippi; the Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth, a leader of the civil rights movement; Jim Dyke, former Secretary of Education in Virginia; Richard Thompson, State Superintendent in Mississippi; and Dr. Richard Arrington, former Mayor of Birmingham – who could speak to the role of and vision needed among leaders attempting to negotiate change within and around complex and often highly contentious social issues and institutions. Cultural changes were considered in sessions with authors and journalists, including Peter Appelbome of the New York Times and author of *Dixie Rising*, and a daylong seminar with education writers developed by the Hechinger Institute at Columbia University. These experiences helped participants to break out of traditional notions of their work and the work of schools, enabling them to reframe assumptions about what they can do, what principals can do, what teachers can do and, most importantly, what students can do.

Participating BellSouth executives ranged from Duane Ackerman, CEO, to presidents and vice presidents of BellSouth units, to senior managers over different operations. The BellSouth Executive Leadership group also facilitated sessions at the company's executive education venue outside Atlanta, where the Network met once each year.

Network Attributes

Focused on the South

This culture was rooted less in gauzy and romantic visions of an antebellum South than in an urgent understanding that the region was undergoing rapid change and that the quality of life that would characterize a transformed South depended on nothing so much as the quality of education that the region offered to all its citizens.

Several outside observers of the Network remarked that only in the South could a group of superintendents be configured on a regional basis. A similar approach, they noted, would not make sense, nor have any impact on the nature or quality of learning anywhere else. From the beginning, BellSouth believed, as part of a theory of action for its investment in leadership development, that devoting effort to educational issues in a regional context had particular meaning for the South and would add value to the SLN. This belief arose out of the Foundation's previous experience; it also was rooted in the BellSouth Corporation's focus on the region.

BellSouth's belief in the efficacy of a regional approach arose from what it witnessed when it convened region-wide groups to consider various issues. Whether participants had spent their lives in the South or had joined the recent tide of migration there, it was clear that discussions and work were informed by a shared culture. This culture was rooted less in gauzy and romantic visions of an antebellum South than in an urgent understanding that the region was undergoing rapid change and that the quality of life that would characterize a transformed South depended on nothing so much as the quality of education that the region offered to all its citizens. Residents were aware of the inevitability of change all around them; how the region would anticipate and respond to it was an unresolved question. The Network considered various possibilities, through readings, through interaction with others whose work brought them into constant connection with the changes that were affecting the region, and through discussions that linked the changing culture of the region to the daily challenges that superintendents face.

A focus on changing economics and culture could have, however, obscured the issue that for so long set the region apart. Race – relationships between blacks and whites – had defined the South's past and continue to limit opportunity for too many black citizens. In this regard, race was very much on the minds of superintendents. When asked to list important events or issues in their careers as district leaders, many superintendents tended not to speak of their selection, nor of awards and honors won, nor of board relations, nor of labor strife, but rather of desegregation, of inequitable resources to meet different needs and of continuing achievement gaps.

Considerations of race also infused superintendents' discussions of what lay ahead for their districts. The changing demographics revealed by new census data were already manifest in the composition of the participants' districts. The South had become a much more diverse place; more and more newcomers trace recent origins not to the Northeast or Midwest but to Latin America and Asia. How would districts that were still struggling with black-white issues continue to adapt to the presence of multiple languages and customs?

Discussions about these issues began slowly but gained momentum as superintendents became increasingly comfortable with one another and realized that the Network afforded them a rare opportunity to speak freely. The designers encouraged this dialogue and several Institutes probed this theme as part of the capacity-building work of the Network. Focusing on the region gave the Network a distinctive emphasis and provided another entry point to issues that confront all superintendents.

The Network deliberately exposed participants to leaders and innovators in fields outside of education, encouraging them to learn new approaches for framing problems as well as new ways of thinking about and motivating change.

Network Attributes

Technologically Adept

The BellSouth Corporation is a communications company; technology is its core business and technological innovation is the bedrock of its success. The staff of the BellSouth Foundation, understanding the power of technology and having witnessed how it has changed fundamentally the manner in which every other sector and industry conducts its business, believed that technology could similarly alter education. Mastery of technology could, staff believed, shape and transform teaching in ways that dramatically improve learning. At the same time, staff saw clearly that few educators – from superintendents through classroom teachers – held a similar vision of technology as an education tool. Even as hardware and software were placed in increasing numbers of schools and classrooms, few educators understood how these could be integrated into instruction and management to help students reach instructional goals. Many, in fact, seemed to be intimidated by computers and other technological resources. Recognizing this gap, Foundation staff determined that technology would infuse all aspects of the Foundation's programs.

The Foundation assumed that participants in the Network would be similar to their peers throughout the region in their use of technology – a few would have incorporated it into their work, some would be fearful of turning their computers on, and most would fall somewhere between the two extremes. One of the goals of the Network, which helped shape its design, was to increase participants' exposure to and knowledge of technology. Accordingly, a Network website was established to support regular communication and online work among members, the Foundation and CLSR staff. If members joined the Network without having their own personal email address or Internet connection (as was true of many in the first cohort), BellSouth established both for them. In addition, many of the Network site visits and speakers were chosen expressly to reveal to participants the wide variety of emerging technologies and the powerful ways they were transforming workplaces everywhere.

Participants also were connected to and invited to participate in the Foundation's other technology-related initiatives. The primary one was edu.pwr³, a \$10 million commitment carried out in three stages: Power to Lead, Power to Teach and Power to Learn. The first of these, Power to Lead, was focused on school superintendents and engaged 394 of these district CEOs in BellSouth territory in one of a series of 26 seminars that included a computer simulation experience. The goal was to raise awareness of the CEO's integral role in modeling, championing and directing technology infusion geared to improved teaching and learning throughout their districts. Power to Lead participants were then eligible for grants to continue their own professional development as technology leaders; 81 grants were awarded.

SLN members also were included in the development of the Foundation's Budgeting for Technology initiative. Three of the four technical assistance sites of this effort were SLN members and all members were offered opportunities to serve as evaluators and beta site users of the online budgeting tool developed through that effort.

Overall, the various Network technology opportunities proved to be successful in increasing the knowledge of and comfort with technology among participants and in exposing them to examples of its transforming potential. As a result, several superintendents, including some who openly admitted their aversion to computers and other technologies prior to joining the Network, undertook extensive technology initiatives in their districts that they attributed to their experiences in the SLN.

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through words
but through action,
their districts in
fully incorporating
this tool.*

Network Attributes

While the Network increased familiarity with technology for most members, it did not expand their use of the communications tools provided as much as the designers had hoped. BellSouth and CLSR staff used the listserv extensively to communicate with members. All notes of Institutes and other documents created by members relating to SLN work were posted on the SLN website for reference. Among the participants themselves, some used it regularly to send email messages of congratulations, sympathy or other gestures of support to one another; in this respect it facilitated the development of a “caring community.” Others used it as an information source by posing job-related queries to colleagues. Responses to these queries were almost always quick and to the point, demonstrating how practical this resource could be.

But the overall use was uneven, and this was not atypical of what BellSouth has found from its other attempts to infuse technology as a key component of its education work. There are two possible reasons for this. The Foundation itself was still learning how to coordinate such online work and lacked a dedicated staff person who could update and promote such work on a daily basis. Additionally, the nature of the work to be done online was sometimes vague and not always of a high priority given the many urgencies educators, and especially superintendents, face on a daily basis.

BellSouth and CLSR have learned that, unless there is shared and sustained common work that is of high importance to the members of a group, program websites serve primarily as a place to post announcements or a means to send email to a distribution group. They also discovered that, while many education leaders may grow in their understanding of technology as a critical teaching and operating tool and as a means for driving innovation in an organization, a fewer number are able to successfully translate this belief into action right away.

It is clear that, while the technology itself may change at a breakneck pace, the people who use it change much more gradually. Technology integration is proving to be like most other aspects of education reform – real progress is made but the journey is proving longer and perhaps more circuitous than anticipated.

Integrating technology is proving to be like other aspects of education reform – real progress is made but the journey is proving longer and perhaps more circuitous than anticipated.

FEEDBACK FROM THE FRONTLINES

It has been said that a network is one of the most powerful assets an individual can possess. This has been the case for these superintendents who have shared stories and learned from one another about the challenges they face and the legacies they want to leave behind.

The Superintendents Leadership Network was created and designed to spur change among a defined group – school superintendents in the South who were recognized for their commitment to systemic reform. However, BellSouth and CLSR understood that the new capacities that they wished to foster in participants' districts would emerge slowly – districts are complex systems and, while superintendents might embrace readily the SLN's beliefs, it would take time for those understandings to penetrate and be absorbed among their staffs and throughout their districts.

BellSouth and CLSR staff did not make site visits in order to evaluate the connections between what was offered in the Institutes and activity in districts (although they did visit many districts for other reasons). Instead, the program designers constantly asked participants for feedback in various forms as a way to gauge how well district staff understood and acted on the Network's approach. The Institutes provided a forum where superintendents discussed what they were doing differently and what changes they were seeing in their districts as a result of their membership in the Network. The superintendents also participated in interviews and responded to surveys, which probed for information about their backgrounds, their job experiences and their views about their work. These answers provide insights into the state of the superintendency and the impact of the Network. Highlights of their reflections are summarized below and on the following pages.

Participant Characteristics

District Type: The districts range in locale from urban to suburban to rural. Even within specific locales, there is variety. Some rural districts are located in mountain regions, others in low-lying coastal areas. There are, moreover, districts that incorporate more than one type of locale, serving students from both rural and suburban communities or suburban and urban communities.

Tenure: The length of time superintendents have served in their current districts varies from one year to ten; on average they have held their current superintendency for almost five years. Many held previous superintendent positions so that the average length of time they have been superintendent is seven and one-half years. Only a handful of participants report being superintendents for ten or more years.

The overwhelming majority of these superintendents have spent their professional life in education, first as classroom teachers and then as assistant principals or principals. Some moved directly from the principalship to the superintendency – either the full superintendency or, in most cases, first serving as an associate or assistant superintendent. Several participants held other positions on district office staffs before assuming the superintendency. A few made detours to state education agencies or to higher education, but these were the exception.

District Size: Participants in the Network serve in districts that vary in size, student composition and locale. (See Appendix C). The average district size by student population is approximately 25,000 students. Over half of the districts, however, have 10,000 or fewer students. Three superintendents serve in very large districts – around 100,000 students – and several more lead districts that are only slightly smaller. The majority of students in two-thirds of the districts are white although, in over half of the districts, at least one-third of students are minority. In over 40 percent of the districts, half or more of all students qualify for the Free and Reduced Lunch program.

The average length of time they have been superintendent is seven and one-half years.

FEEDBACK

From The Frontlines

Participants Reflect on the Superintendency

The superintendents were asked to share their insights into and predictions for the state of the superintendency. Their comments, summarized here, can – by highlighting pressing needs and continuing challenges – inform the work of others interested in building capacity among educational leaders, as it will inform the next iteration of this effort.

Pressure: Many participants believe that heightened accountability is the greatest pressure superintendents face today. Many comment on the pressure to improve test scores but also speak of the need to respond to changing demographics, shrinking financial resources and increasing demands from special interest groups. “Pressures now facing a superintendent include: child poverty and the resulting inequalities that children bring to school; high stakes testing and school rankings; and dwindling resources.” Several also speak of the need for better communication with various constituencies to move forward with reform initiatives as well as to survive in increasingly political environments.

Another pressure referred to frequently, in different contexts, is school boards. While this seems more prominent for superintendents in large urban districts, all participants feel it to some extent. Yet, while most participants feel some anxiety regarding the stability of their school board relationships, the majority also feels that their personal management of their own school board represents a significant strength and success. When asked to explain this seeming contradiction, one explained: “I am good at this because I think about it and work at it constantly – I can’t let up for a minute. But that’s not what I want to do or feel I should be doing: my job should be focused on the work we give to our students.”

Several participants spoke of the strain of operating in continuous uncertainty – how the best laid plans can be cast awry by a funding crisis, unanticipated board action, shifts in the political environment, natural disasters such as fire or flooding, and much more – yet still holding the ultimate responsibility for everything that happens in the system. The need to be decisive amid the certainty of uncertainty and constant change is, therefore, an absolute necessity for superintendents today.

Impact: When asked to reflect on the area in which superintendents can have the greatest impact, this group arrived at no consensus; there are, however, some repeating themes in respondents’ comments. Articulated in various ways, many participants describe their role in creating and sustaining a vision for their districts. They also speak of the need to live the vision and carry through on its promise – to implement systems that are student-centered and that are clearly connected to the goal of greater student learning.

A specific area where participants feel superintendents can and should have significant impact is staff – ensuring that every classroom has a caring and competent teacher through selecting the best qualified teachers and principals and developing the skills of each through effective professional development.

Undergirding all of the responses is a conviction that superintendents can have an impact – they can affect change – and that affecting change requires them to be decision-makers and leaders. “Building capacity for change is critical to the superintendent. I am successful only as I help others find success.”

“Building capacity for change is critical to the superintendent. I am successful only as I help others find success.”

FEEDBACK

From The Frontlines

Encouraging collaboration and the development of a shared vision for education does not relieve the superintendent of making difficult decisions, but helps to ensure support to begin and sustain change.

Peer interaction: The majority of Network participants report feeling isolated as superintendents. Many testify to a lack of peer interaction – there is only one superintendent per district and opportunities for peer interaction are infrequent. Furthermore, superintendents see themselves as responsible for making decisions that at times are unpopular or controversial. As one respondent put it, “A superintendent is expected to be at every function, be available to everyone and be no more loyal to one organization than to another. When she returns home, there is no group that she can call hers.” Those who do not speak about being isolated describe such strategies as building leadership teams to share responsibility, empowering people to be problem-solvers and interacting regularly with teachers.

Minority and female superintendents describe the value of having a support network for another reason. Members of both groups speak, even more than their peers, of uncertainty about their futures: while their present situations may be stable and comfortable, they are not as confident of securing another comparable position should they leave. Racism and gender bias are ever-present as a subtext to future opportunities outside of larger urban cities, they feel.

New Skills: In considering the skills or characteristics that superintendents today need, which they did not need five or ten years ago, approximately one-third of respondents cite technology skills. Just as students need enhanced technology knowledge and skills, so too do the people who lead school systems.

A majority of respondents point to another set of skills they believe successful superintendents must have – the ability to listen, negotiate, communicate and collaborate. This perhaps reflects a shift in their view of leadership from a traditional, hierarchical structure in which one person, the superintendent, would make decisions without input from others, to one in which the superintendent seeks out information from and builds connections among various stakeholders. As one participant put it, superintendents need “team building, collaboration, leadership (versus management), political acumen and to be a little of the magician and miracle worker.” Encouraging collaboration and the development of a shared vision for education does not relieve the superintendent of making difficult decisions but helps, among other things, to ensure support to begin and sustain change.

Future: In considering the future of the superintendency, over three-quarters of Network participants anticipate increased numbers of women as superintendents in the next five to ten years. Almost as many believe that more people of color will become superintendents as well. In part, due to a burgeoning shortage of qualified personnel, a number of participants also believe that many future superintendents will be younger and will come from careers outside the field of education.

The need to be decisive amid the certainty of uncertainty and constant change is, therefore, an absolute necessity for superintendents today.

FEEDBACK

From The Frontlines

Experiences in the Network

Participants also were asked to consider their experiences in the SLN, including what they have gained from it, how it has shaped their thinking and actions, and what might be added or changed to meet the needs of future participants.

Benefits: The benefit most often cited by participants is meeting regularly with peers. The Network has provided a safe forum for participants to discuss openly their challenges and concerns, to exchange information and ideas, and to support one another in a job that is often stressful and sometimes contentious. As one participant stated, "(the) opportunity to be surrounded by people who are 'All-Stars' – this group of superintendents is a resource by itself. Such a gathering of talent over a period of time is unprecedented." Unsurprisingly, when asked what facet of the program was of the greatest value to them, the majority of respondents indicate that it is the other participants they value most about their Network experience. Most superintendents could not, in fact, cite a component of the Network that is not valuable to them.

Beyond regular and meaningful interaction with peers, many participants appreciate the chance to examine issues from a new perspective, often issues of a global or systemic nature that few have the opportunity to consider while trying to keep up with the daily demands of running a school district. Several participants noted as well the value of CLSR's frameworks, specifically "Working on the Work." The frameworks have helped them to examine the assumptions they had about teaching and learning and reconsider the role of adults in classrooms and schools.

Well over half of participants indicate that how they now view the larger context around schools and districts, as a result of insights gained in the Network, is another lesson that they will carry with them beyond the program. An additional long-term value to participants is how they now work with their administrative and instructional staff as a result of the program.

Results: Participation in the Network has led to real change in what superintendents and their faculty do. Almost one-third of participants indicate that there is now a greater focus on the work provided to students, either through implementation of CLSR's Working on the Work framework or through other strategies. One participant observes, "We are focusing on the work that students do rather than the behaviors of adults." Among remaining participants, the impact of the Network was spread across a variety of areas. Several participants note they are using technology more effectively both as an instructional tool and as an administrative one. Others speak of enhanced communication skills, vital for building and conveying a vision of reformed education to teachers, parents, business representatives and others in the community. Still others speak of providing greater support for and more guidance to teachers and principals. Some superintendents are spending more time with principals in their schools focusing on instruction. Others have organized or promoted regular book readings and discussions about successful instructional strategies or are utilizing new assessment techniques to inform instructional practice. Participation in the SLN has led to real and tangible change in districts.

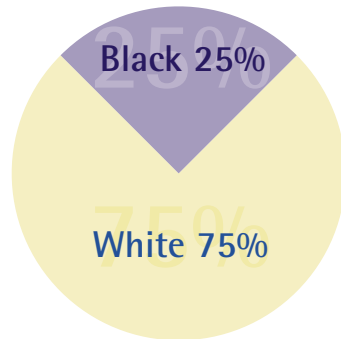
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FEEDBACK

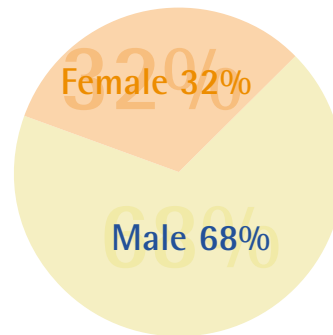
From The Frontlines

SLN Profile*

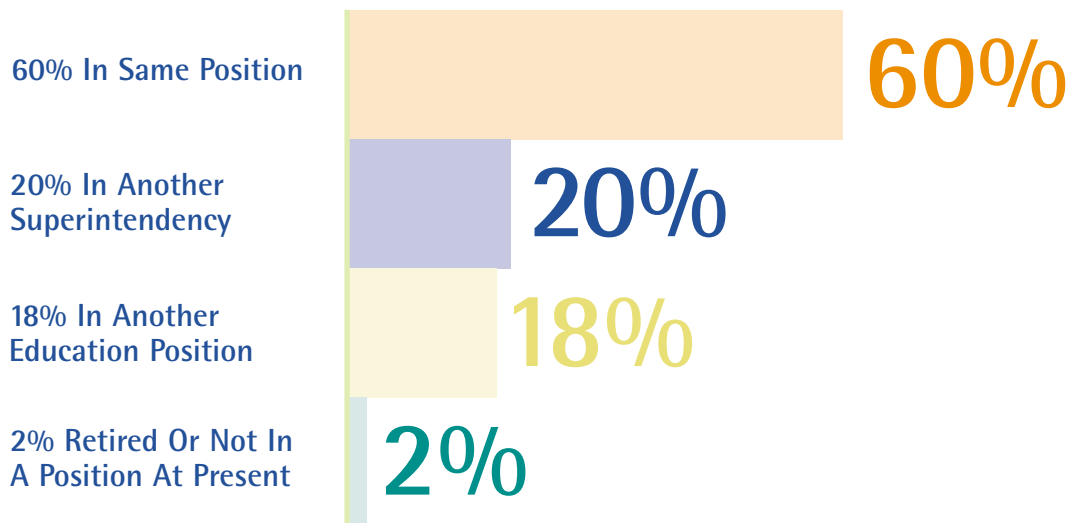
Racial Mix of SLN Members



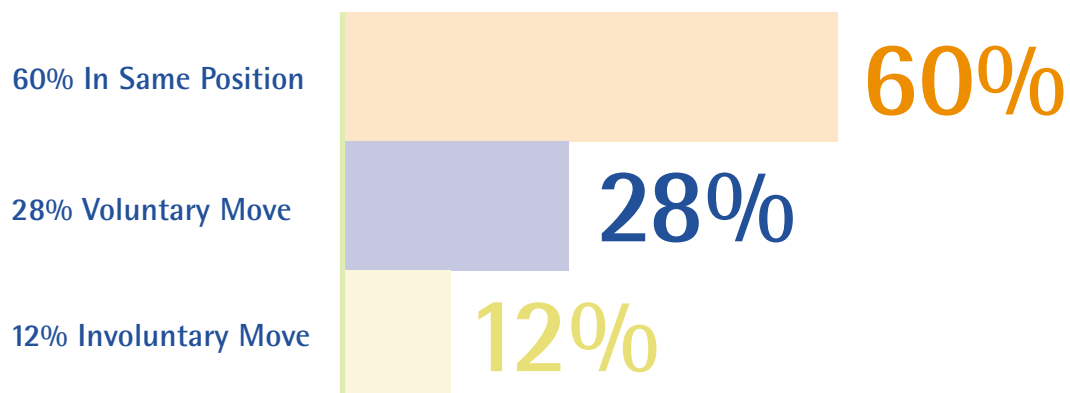
Gender Mix of SLN Members



Job Status of SLN Members



Voluntary/Involuntary Movement of SLN Members



* These numbers are based on 56 active and associate members.

EMERGING LESSONS

This chapter describes some of the emerging lessons that have changed superintendents' work in districts. It also considers and challenges some of the underlying assumptions the designers had about how the SLN would function.

From its inception, the Superintendents Leadership Network was intended to be a learning process for all involved – the superintendents, the BellSouth Foundation and the Center for Leadership in School Reform. While explicit outcomes for any of the stakeholders were not specified at the outset, both the participants and the designers did gain considerable new knowledge and insights, which have enhanced their work within and outside of the Network. This chapter describes some of the emerging lessons that have changed superintendents' work in districts. It also considers and challenges some of the underlying assumptions the designers had about how the SLN would function. Finally, it considers the impact to date of the Network on the work of both CLSR and the BellSouth Foundation.

Participation in the Network pushed superintendents to examine critically their roles as district leaders as well as the assumptions they had about their systems and the students these systems serve. Participating superintendents now see themselves as leaders rather than educators. They speak often of insights about transformative leadership that have been gleaned from other sectors. They also report reading more widely than they did before and with greater attention to organizational development and system change analyses.

Their vision of education and their beliefs about the fundamental work of their districts has also expanded. Many of the superintendents embraced CLSR's Working on the Work framework. Toward that end, a number of superintendents and members of their staffs journeyed to Louisville, where they worked with CLSR on specific aspects of the reform agenda. Others went beyond this and contracted with CLSR for longer-term relationships. CLSR worked on site with these districts to drive the WOW framework deeper into the consciousness of both teaching and administrative staff. Regardless, however, of whether or not they pursued greater collaboration with CLSR, participants were driven by a vision of transformed systems of education that linked the knowledge they were gaining and the skills they were developing through the Network to their work in their districts. The evidence of this, though not quantitative, is extensive. Highlights of this evidence follow.

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EMERGING Lessons

For Superintendents

Communication Skills: Many superintendents became more proficient in communications skills, including the ability to make public presentations more effectively and to deal with questions from the media. This resulted from one-on-one training with a media and communications consultant provided by BellSouth. Even those who had believed themselves to be adept in dealing with print and broadcast outlets and not in need of advice prior to joining the Network found themselves benefitting from enhanced skills.

Technology Initiatives: Many superintendents pursued new district technology initiatives. One Georgia participant is typical of many others: this superintendent, who had admitted an initial suspicion of the value of technology for instruction and communication, as a result of her experiences in the Network put into operation a comprehensive technology plan, which called not only for more widespread use of technology in classrooms but also used technology to communicate more effectively with school staffs, parents and members of the community. She attributed this epiphany to being forced to work online as a condition of participation in the Network, and she has gone on to champion this approach to other statewide colleagues.

Professional Development: The Institutes also greatly affected the nature of professional development in many districts. Many superintendents had already been motivated to move away from the "one-shot" professional development days that have little long-term impact on how teachers teach or students learn, but they lacked a way to make their professional development offerings cohere. As a result of the Network, they moved to tie professional development much more closely to clearly articulated goals for instruction and learning. Professional development in these districts became aligned with capacity building around developing more interesting and challenging work for students.

Improving Student Work: Many districts reported still other changes, all of which were focused on improving student work. Some involved different uses of time – alterations in heretofore fixed schedules to allow for more flexibility in using the instructional day or to create more room for teachers to plan together or work collegially on projects. Some districts reordered how and what they communicated with parents about expectations for students. Still other districts reorganized administrative roles to ensure better use of resources for instruction. Other superintendents, enthusiastic about directing their energies to make student work more interesting and challenging, put in place a process that connected students to integral aspects of the design of that work.

These and other changes undertaken by superintendents in their districts were attributable to participation in the Network and were meaningful steps in adopting a coherent approach to reform that was tied to specific understandings about capacity building.

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EMERGING Lessons

For the Network

The experiences and evolution of the SLN yielded some important lessons that should affect its form and function as it continues. In their approach to the Network, the designers, drawing on their extensive experience and observation, had operated under several assumptions about how the SLN should look and how it should function. Some of these assumptions were confirmed by the Network experience; others were not. Those assumptions confirmed by the Network include the following:

Superintendents are isolated and would value a safe space to gather with and learn from their peers. Participants overwhelmingly view membership as an opportunity to be exploited fully; attendance at Institutes has averaged 75 percent of active members and survey responses underscore the pleasure that superintendents feel in being part of the Network.

The sanctity of the Network as a forum for superintendents only – as a place where they can talk freely and frankly – is valued by the participants. As superintendents tried to push through changes in their districts that arose from the Network, a few suggested that the Network should host sessions for district teams. Network designers resisted this; as intended, superintendents attended Institute meetings unaccompanied by board or staff. The majority of participants have made clear that they prefer this arrangement; the Network and what transpires within it is “theirs” and the introduction of outsiders would, in their strongly-expressed opinions, alter both its character and the nature of their experiences.

Superintendents do not see their work or their roles in their districts in a larger context. Helping them to do so will support an expanded vision of education and encourage them to pursue innovative change strategies. The SLN sought to create conditions where superintendents are viewed as chief executives of an enterprise whose product – education – is considered crucial to the success of virtually all other endeavors. Participants' roles as heads of complex, vital systems were continually reinforced by readings, presentations and discussions, many of which stress lessons from business and politics, and by regular exposure to other leaders from these fields. The designers' belief that treating superintendents as significant leaders would help spur them to approach their responsibilities in different ways has been borne out by the superintendents' expressed realization that there is a connection between how they are regarded by the people with whom they interact in their jobs and how they act in those jobs.

The sanctity of the Network as a forum for superintendents only – as a place where they can talk freely and frankly – is valued by the participants.

EMERGING Lessons

Recognition validates the superintendents' work and can support dissemination of best practices that arise out of the Network.

Transforming school districts is often a controversial and arduous task. It can leave those leading it disheartened and uncertain as to whether they should continue their efforts. Recognition for their work – from their peers and from the broader community – can reinforce superintendents' commitment to the process. During the course of the Network, many participants were recognized by others for their exemplary work in stimulating positive change in their districts. Gerry House, then superintendent in Memphis, was selected National Superintendent of the Year in 1999. Many other members of the group have been State Superintendents of the Year, and a few have been finalists in the national competition. While there is no causal relationship between Network membership and these awards, the positive attention garnered by members speaks, at a minimum, to the caliber of individual in the Network and the validity of the selection process that BellSouth and CLSR utilized.

In addition to the recognition afforded individual superintendents, the program itself also was cited as exemplary by two independent agencies. In 1998, the Conference Board, a business organization concerned about societal issues, designated the Superintendents Leadership Network as one of that year's Innovative Public-Private Partnerships. It recognized the significant contribution that the SLN was making to improving teaching and learning by building capacity among district leaders. The Conference Board acknowledged the fundamental need for a strong education system in promoting a healthy economy and credited the multi-dimensional collaboration represented by the SLN with pushing lasting change in a number of districts. One year later, the Council for Aid to Education, a part of the RAND Corporation, bestowed upon the SLN its Leaders for Change Award. This award honors outstanding, long-term corporate commitment to improving education at all levels. In choosing the Superintendents Leadership Network, the Council made special note of the Network's use of advanced methods of leadership development from business and the nonprofit world and its cost effectiveness.

Recognition, while a central part of the Network's design, was a means to greater ends – generating support for reforming school systems in ways that would produce better outcomes for students, and building a regional base of understanding and support for school reform, to sustain the work of participants and other reform-minded leaders. BellSouth and CLSR saw the superintendents as their partners in this endeavor; they were selected based on their devotion to, and experience with, reform. Recognition would call attention to the vital role of effective leadership in reform and, later, of the role that professional development programs can play in building leadership.

Transforming systems of education is not a short-term endeavor; it is a process of continuous learning and continuous improvement.

The complexity of the reform endeavor was, if anything, underestimated by the designers. The eagerness of the first cohort to continue participating in the Network was evidence of this and of the Network's value as a resource to them. Reform, as the designers learned, however, is more than an extended undertaking. As the Network evolved, it became apparent that transformation takes places on different levels and that change on one level is linked to change on another. Network activities, in their entirety, were developed to produce interim changes that, over time, would lead to changed systems and better student learning.

Recognition was a means to greater ends – generating support for reforming school systems in ways that would produce better outcomes for students, and building a regional base of understanding and support for school reform

EMERGING Lessons

On the other hand, not all of the assumptions made by the designers in developing the Network were supported by what actually occurred.

The complexity of the reform endeavor was, if anything, underestimated by the designers ...transformation takes places on different levels and change on one level is linked to change on another.

A shared vision of and commitment to reform by superintendents from diverse districts would bridge real differences in their jobs. As powerful as the Network is, it has evolved as somewhat more responsive to the needs of smaller and medium-sized district leaders than it is to those of superintendents from larger urban districts. In part, this disconnect resulted because there were more participants from the small and mid-sized districts and their concerns tended to dominate some of the discussions. At the same time, however, it became clear that superintendents from larger urban districts had more opportunities to avail themselves of organizations and associations dedicated to their interests and had easier and more exclusive access to resources that their peers from smaller districts could only access through the Network. Superintendents from larger districts are also more called upon to present and participate at national meetings, putting more demands on their time. Given the specific orientation of these other groups and the limited time that district leaders have for external professional development, it is not surprising that some participants from larger districts found themselves often unable to attend. (Superintendents of a couple of very large districts are notable exceptions. Others of the larger districts utilized the Network curriculum by contracting independently with CLSR.)

Participation in the Network would reduce the job volatility among participants. When BellSouth first considered investing in a venue where superintendents could interact with one another, it was concerned about the volatility of the superintendency. The SLN partners hoped that mutual support would surface "survival strategies" that would enable superintendents to last longer in their jobs and build greater community support for their work. As the Network grew, however, it became clear that Network participation did not inoculate superintendents against the insecurity that infects the job.

Appendix A lists the participating superintendents, their districts, the cohort in which they entered the Network, their current membership status, their current job status and, for those in other jobs, where they are now. Among SLN members, 60% remain in their same positions.

Technology would effectively link superintendents to one another and to CLSR and BellSouth staff, fostering rich exchanges of information, ideas and reflections. Technology use to communicate among membership was a condition of membership. However, electronic exchanges among members, while widespread, were limited in depth. CLSR maintained an active and secure website for the Network that was regularly updated and a listserv was created. Over the long run it proved, however, much more useful for exchanges of news and messages than for promoting ongoing discussion around issues or common work. More planning was needed to foster deeper interaction and, for the interaction to be authentic, some responsibility for its design and ultimate use needed to be placed on the participants themselves. Given superintendents' schedules, it is unclear if this expectation is realistic. Busy professionals may simply be unable to take time to engage in regular, in-depth electronic communication, unrelated to the exigencies of their work, with their peers.

EMERGING Lessons

For CLSR

CLSR's involvement with the SLN led to an expansion of its own thinking about reform. One of CLSR's great strengths has been its consistency, most apparent in its fidelity to its beliefs and the frameworks and standards that grow out of them. Working with BellSouth and a diverse group of superintendents gave CLSR an opportunity to consider, to a greater degree than it had done so before, the various contexts in which its approach plays out. As a result, CLSR has expanded its work with networks beyond the Superintendents Leadership Network, and it is reaching out to create new learning opportunities for school principals. CLSR has always incorporated examples from business in its work; it is now more directly considering the interrelationships among culture, business, politics and education in stimulating continuing reform.

CLSR has also been encouraged by its participation in the SLN to interact more with private funders. Early in its history, the organization was supported in part by grants from foundations. In recent years, its funding has, in substantial part, come from districts and individuals. Its collaboration with BellSouth, and the high regard its work with the Network has attracted, have re-introduced it to the foundation community and expanded its potential to partner with others.

Finally, the themes that CLSR effectively introduced to the superintendents have influenced significantly its thinking about its own work. Nowhere is this more apparent than in its exploration of the question of what change-adept leaders leave behind for others to build on. CLSR has asked superintendents to consider their legacies – what they would like to be known for when they leave their current work. In focusing on this concept, superintendents have mined their own feelings about what is essential for their efforts to make a lasting impact. The investigation has special meaning for CLSR, which has, since its inception been directed and greatly influenced by the ideas of Phillip Schlechty. How Schlechty's ideas will continue to mold CLSR's future efforts is a legacy question for CLSR that relates to its work with superintendents.

CLSR has asked superintendents to consider their legacies... and explore the question of what change-adept leaders leave behind for others to build on.

CLSR has expanded its work with networks beyond the Superintendents Leadership Network and is reaching out to create new learning opportunities for school principals.

EMERGING Lessons

For BellSouth Foundation

BellSouth believes that engaging a critical mass of people in collaborative learning and shared work will lead to broader results in the region.

The BellSouth Foundation has also learned from its investment in the SLN. New and powerful relationships with superintendents have given it easier access to districts and communities. More in-depth knowledge of these communities adds value to the Foundation's relationships with other components of the company. This has led to better intelligence about local and state issues and better decision-making about appropriate corporate and philanthropic responses to community issues and needs. It also has encouraged the Foundation to make new investments in districts where it has built relationships through the Network and where it has evidence of and confidence in the leadership abilities of the superintendent. Working on a regular basis with individuals who are on the front lines of the reform struggle has given the Foundation fresh insights into the everyday challenges of changing how students are educated. In short, the Foundation's knowledge base has expanded, making it more proficient in diagnosing and responding to important educational questions.

Besides adding to the Foundation's knowledge base, the Network has placed an indelible stamp on how the Foundation does its business. Experience with the SLN as well as other grantee networks in teacher education, comprehensive student health and education policy, has led the Foundation to a preferred mode of operating. It now operates substantially through foundation-directed initiatives and, in these, seeks to create and nurture networks of individuals who share ideas, practices and problems. Technology is a powerful instrument in connecting members of these various networks to one another. BellSouth believes that this approach, by engaging a critical mass of people in collaborative learning and shared work, will lead to broader results in the region. Investing in networks has become a signature of the Foundation's style and has enabled it to become involved in a significant number of issues at scale, which, given its limited resources, it might not otherwise be able to do.

Working on a regular basis with individuals who are on the front lines of the reform struggle has given the Foundation fresh insights into the everyday challenges of changing how students are educated.

EMERGING Lessons

Some Cautions

These lessons are provided with a word of caution and a note of explanation. The experiences of the participating superintendents and the changes they made in their approaches to their work in districts and with students speak only to them. These superintendents were selected specifically because they had demonstrated a commitment to change. This commitment differentiates them from some of their peers. The Network experience may resonate in similar ways among a broad cross-section of other superintendents, but it may not.

In addition, the Network experience as a means to move district leaders to certain action was not tested. The design of the Network does not ask participants to commit to carrying out any one specific change in their districts. Superintendents were chosen because of their overall commitment to change. They were not, however, required to apply what they were learning in the Network to a specific change process in their systems. They were asked instead to reflect systematically on how what they were learning might affect the changes they were already pursuing. For some participants then, the Network promoted changes in their own thought more than immediate action in their districts. On the other hand, the majority of superintendents saw participation as a means to accelerate change and, sooner or later, they involved staff and governing boards in the framework they were pursuing in the Institutes. This was, however, an outgrowth of participation; it was not a condition of it.

The Superintendents Leadership Network does, however, speak strongly to how different organizations that share common goals can work together. It also exemplifies the value of an iterative process – how learning through practice and deliberate and ongoing reflection can expand initiative's means and take it beyond its original goals – as well as how organizations that adhere to it can serve as a model to those seeking to change, in meaningful ways, the work that they do.

The Network speaks strongly to how different organizations that share common goals can work together. It also exemplifies the value of an iterative process.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Transformative leadership development – professional development for superintendents, high-level administrators and principals that is designed to produce systemic change – is qualitatively different from the information-sharing and skill-building exercises that comprise so much of professional development.

NEW OPPO

Leadership development for educators has been described as displaying more of the characteristics of an unsettled frontier than a defined field. The sheer number of programs, the wide variety of sponsors along with different and sometimes conflicting approaches, and the lack of clear agreement on how to measure and compare outcomes make it difficult to determine what effectively designed and good professional development for education leaders is.

Leadership development for educators has been described as displaying more of the characteristics of an unsettled frontier than a defined field.

In considering this question, there is a preliminary issue to deal with: good for what? A significant amount of what some call leadership development is devoted toward stand-alone workshops around specific issues. Information is shared or participants work toward mastery of a specific subject or skill. These learnings make individuals more aware of a specific context in which they work, more knowledgeable about a subject or more proficient in an aspect of their work. While the offerings that result in these outcomes add real value to what leaders do, they are not for the most part directed toward the deep changes that will lead to transformed systems and better outcomes for students.

Transformative leadership development – professional development for superintendents, high-level administrators and principals that is designed to produce systemic change – is qualitatively different from the information-sharing and skill-building exercises mentioned above.

Transformative leadership development:

is directly related to developing strategies that will improve student learning;

is clearly aligned with educational reform efforts that have been adopted by schools or school districts;

develops and/or enhances those capacities that will promote the reforms adopted by districts and schools;

follows clearly articulated theories of adult learning;

requires sufficient time for learning, testing what one has learned and adapting it to specific needs;

posits clearly defined outcomes and both long- and short-term ways for the desired outcomes to be measured.¹

Kronley, Robert A. *From Frontier to Field: A Preliminary Scan of Non-University-Based Professional Development Programs for Incumbent Superintendents and Principals* and "Memorandum to Readers of *From Frontier to Field: Principles and Questions for Discussion*. Presented at the National Conference on Educational Leadership at Teachers College, Columbia University, September 14-15, 2000. Sponsored by the Wallace – Reader's Digest Funds.

OPPORTUNITIES

BellSouth and CLSR deliberately sought to create and implement a transformative leadership development effort that was rooted in an increased understanding of the importance of capacity building to improve the quality of work assigned to students.

Transformative professional development requires that schools or districts develop and operate on a discernible theory of change and connects that theory to the capacities a leader needs to bring about desired outcomes. These outcomes must be understood and measurable. The leadership development process must unfold over time and be delivered in a way that will appeal to adults who are being, directly or indirectly, encouraged and supported in efforts to change how they approach their work.

While they did not consciously incorporate the foregoing characteristics in their design, BellSouth and CLSR deliberately sought to create and implement a transformative leadership development effort that was rooted in an increased understanding of the importance of capacity building to improve the quality of work assigned to students. They believed that this understanding would drive deep change in districts and lead to greater learning. As it evolved, the Network evidenced, to greater or lesser degrees, many of the qualities that distinguish transformative professional development.

In 2000, BellSouth Foundation completed another of its periodic reviews and determined its priorities for the next five years. After reviewing all of its past work, analyzing trends and other data, considering the contexts in which the education reform movement now operates, and talking with experts and highly-regarded practitioners in a number of areas, the Foundation determined to renew its involvement with leadership development for superintendents. A revised Superintendents Leadership Network with CLSR will begin to operate in Fall 2001.

There is little doubt that the new effort will build on the nurturing climate that the Foundation and CLSR were able to create in the original Network. The next iteration of the initiative also will continue to draw on an expanded capacity-building framework that CLSR is developing and it will continue to draw lessons from sectors other than education. Participants have profited from viewing their work in larger social, political and cultural contexts, and expansion of this technique aligns well with capacity-building work. These are all proven strengths of the program and will, as they are refined, continue to provide substantial value to the Network.

In addition, in planning the scope and shape of the new program, the designers may wish to consider certain adaptations that could aid them in their efforts to promote work that will support superintendents in transforming their districts.

A revised Superintendents Leadership Network with CLSR will begin to operate in Fall 2001.

NEW OPPO

1 Be clearer and more specific about outcomes for participants. The SLN promulgated standards for how districts could measure their own progress in designing and implementing a Working on the Work framework. It did not, however, explicitly develop and communicate what the program's expectations for participants were and how they were to be measured. Developing these expectations is about more than conforming with theories about professional development; it is a way of probing participants' developmental needs and testing how the program can best meet these needs in the context of promoting systemic reform. In determining superintendents' own needs, the designers, working with the participants, should define what the outcome measures will be. Some of these measures may be the interim outcomes – common language, mutual support, deployment of new skills, etc. – that were observed for the first and second cohorts of the Network. The challenge, however, is to recognize these changes as outcomes and understand their relationship to overall Network goals.

2 Align the curriculum more directly with desired outcomes for participants. The SLN operated without a formal curriculum that was explicitly linked to articulated outcomes for the superintendents, their districts or the Network as a whole. Intent on promulgating the Working on the Work framework, designers assessed progress from Institute to Institute and planned and tested the offerings for each. The absence of a formal curriculum plan, distributed in advance, raised questions among some participants early in the program about coherence. Now that the designers have had an opportunity to test the offerings and monitor their impacts, the promulgation of a plan for the Network, arising out of clearly stated Network and individual goals, will add clarity to the change-oriented approach that marks the SLN.

A plan that shows the relationship of each design element to the others will also enable the designers to integrate better the other skill-building exercises that superintendents valued. In the past, skill-building sessions were offered after an Institute, where need for them was first expressed. Experience should now enable the designers to know when and how best to align reflective and skill-building elements of the program. Similarly, contextual segments on culture and politics should likewise be integrated into the curriculum. A curriculum plan will also enable the designers, should they wish, to be more purposeful in creating joint work, linked by technology, which arises out of the Institutes. Developing this plan also necessitates a process whereby the designers can elicit regular feedback from participants and mechanisms for incorporating feedback into an iterative design.

OPPORTUNITIES

3 Connect some district activity more directly to Institute offerings. Neither BellSouth nor CLSR envisioned the Institutes as places where extensive district work would occur. This is in line with observations about professional development, which say that district reform should take place on site. It may be, though, that occasionally introducing some other key actors from the school system to Institute activities could facilitate work in districts. This is especially true of governing board members, whose support is crucial to the district leader. Involving school board members may afford them opportunities to reflect on change and interact with superintendents in an informal way. It is also true of principals and central office staff, who are all central to carrying out the superintendent's vision for the district. Regardless of whom the Network designers choose to involve, including others in certain Institute offerings should be undertaken with specific objectives for what their involvement will bring and with buy-in from superintendents. These might be done as separate sessions from the regular Institutes as to preserve the "protected space" the participants value so much in the regular Institutes.

4 Balance scale with depth. A significant issue in leadership development is scale: ensuring that a critical mass benefits from a successful program by expanding it to include others or by fostering its replication. The initial design for the Superintendents Leadership Network contemplated that the first cohort of participants would leave after two years and would be replaced by a second group. Members of the first cohort made a compelling case to continue their involvement and the current Network structure – with two cohorts of active members and a group of associate members – was established. A new funding cycle raises questions for the designers about who participates. There is, on the part of funders, an understandable imperative to disseminate an initiative as widely as possible. On the other hand, a new cycle may mean new offerings, and the designers may see strategic opportunities in probing reform more deeply with at least some members of the existing cohorts. Whatever they choose, the designers should explicitly connect the selection criteria to the outcomes that they are pursuing for individuals, districts and the Network as a whole. Their choice, moreover, should be deliberate and based on a theory of action for the initiative.

NEW OPPO

5 Develop new experiences for large urban district superintendents. Designers must also be more mindful of how to deal with superintendents from the larger urban or even the rapidly growing suburban districts that display some of the same characteristics as their downtown neighbors. Feedback from some participants from these districts indicates that special programs geared toward their unique needs are required, if they are to participate regularly in the SLN. This puts greater pressure on the designers, partly because of time and resources and partly because different offerings geared to subgroups within the Network may upset the balance within the group.

6 Connect the Network to other BellSouth initiatives. In creating the SLN, the BellSouth Foundation also created a template for other programs. In the past, the Foundation has worked with others to design networks of colleges of teacher education, in health and education, in state education reform policy, and in technology. As the Foundation experiments with new networks, it should be mindful that these networks can inform one another, and BellSouth should work to connect them.

The designers may also want to consider exposing superintendents to other theories about spurring change in districts beyond those advanced by CLSR. CLSR may wish to take the initiative in inviting other presenters to speak about their approaches and spur superintendents to consider the role of capacity building in these approaches.

7 Give the Network a voice on issues. At BellSouth's initiative, superintendents attempted to frame important educational issues and planned to disseminate their views around the region. Designers learned that it would take an early commitment of resources, a well thought-out and relatively modest agenda and a streamlined process to surface issues, air views, come to agreement and spread ideas. The designers must decide early if they want to pursue this course and quickly gain assent from participants. They may also wish to engage communications consultants to work with them in this aspect of the SLN. Given the geographic underpinnings of the Network, a regional forum of leaders who advocate for reform could have an impact on regional discussions about education, call attention to the importance of leadership development in general and the Network specifically, and add value to the reflective work of the Network.

OPPORTUNITIES

The BellSouth/CLSR Superintendents Leadership Network was created for a group of superintendents who had already demonstrated their capacity for innovation and their devotion to reform. By expanding their horizons beyond the day-to-day challenges of running a district, by drawing on one another for knowledge and support, by focusing on the need to build capacity in all adults to improve learning for students, these leaders were encouraged to continue and deepen their commitments to fundamental change. At the same time, at a moment when leadership development efforts are assuming a central place in national discussions on strategies to transform teaching and learning, this effort by the BellSouth Foundation and CLSR has demonstrated the power and potential of innovation in an area of professional development that had for too long been neglected. In its first years, the SLN initiative evolved considerably, as designers and participants reflected on what they experienced, mined lessons from it and acted on these learnings to make changes in program design and implementation. As the SLN enters a second iteration, it is clear that the Network will continue to evolve, that its results will increasingly be felt as reform gains momentum in the South, and that its lessons will resonate with others similarly interested in leadership development efforts that connect to and advance a powerful vision of reform.

APPENDICES

The BellSouth/CLSR Superintendents Leadership Network operated in nine states and, through its 56 members, had representation from 59 districts in the Southeast over the course of its four years. Information on the members, the Institute meetings, and the states and districts represented follows.

APPENDIX A

Superintendent Leadership Network Members

Name	Cohort	Race	Gender	Original District	Current Position	SLN Status
Peggy Connell	1	W	F	Tallegda Cty., AL	same	active
George Evans	1	B	M	Dallas Cty., AL	same	associate
Charles Mason	1	W	M	Mountain Brook, AL	same	active
Paul Hagerty	1	W	M	Seminole Cty., FL	same	active
Tom McCraley	1	W	M	Osceola Cty., FL	retired **	associate
Bill Vogel	1	W	M	St. Lucie Cty., FL	same	active
Katie Brochu	1	W	F	Sumter Cty., GA	supt., York, SC *	active
Debra Harden	1	W	F	Oconee Cty., GA	Dir., GSSA *	associate
Allene Magill	1	W	F	Forsyth Cty., GA	supt., Dalton, GA*	active
Ben Canada	1	B	M	Atlanta, GA	supt., Portland, OR *	associate
Joe Hairston	1	B	M	Clayton Cty., GA	supt., Baltimore Cty., MD **	associate
Steve Daeschner	1	W	M	Jefferson Cty., KY	same	active
Gary Pack	1	W	M	Simpson Cty., KY	supt., Garfield Cty., CO	associate
Stu Silberman	1	W	M	Daviess Cty., KY	same	active
Rodney LaFon	1	W	M	St. Charles Parish, LA	same	active
Elton Lagasse	1	W	M	Jefferson Parish, LA	same	active
Carlos Hicks	1	W	M	Gulfport, MS	same	active
William Lewis	1	W	M	Petal, MS	Pres., Hinds Comm.College*	associate
Howard Sanders	1	B	M	Hollandale, MS	retired *	associate
Philip Terrell	1	B	M	Pass Christian, MS	same	associate
Janice Davis	1	W	F	Granville Cty., NC	ass. supt., Durham, NC*	active
Ann Denlinger	1	W	F	Durham, NC	same	active
Eric Smith	1	W	M	Charlotte, NC	same	associate
Don Henderson	1	B	M	Richland 1, SC	retired **	associate
Karen Woodward	1	W	F	Anderson, SC	supt., Lexington, SC *	associate
Chip Zullinger	1	W	M	Charleston, SC	supt., Manassas, VA **	associate
David Baker	1	W	M	Clarksville, TN	same	associate
Gerry House	1	B	F	Memphis, TN	Dir., Inst. Student Achievement*	associate
Allen Morgan	1	W	M	Knoxville, TN	retired *	associate
Terry Grier	1	W	M	Williamson Cty., TN	supt., Guilford Cty., NC *	associate
Margaret Breland-Bradley	2	B	F	Escambia Cty., AL	between positions **	associate
Johnny Brown	2	B	M	Birmingham, AL	same	active
Harold Dodge	2	W	M	Mobile Cty., AL	same	active
Larry Walters	2	W	M	Decatur City, AL	same	associate
Pete Kelly	2	W	M	Citrus Cty., FL	principal, Citrus H.S.**	associate
Michael Lannon	2	W	M	Monroe Cty., FL	same	active
Beverly Hall	2	B	F	Atlanta, GA	same	associate
Orval Porter	2	W	M	Habersham Cty., GA	same	active
Linda France	2	W	F	Jessamine Cty., KY	same	active
Blake Haselton	2	W	M	Oldham Cty., KY	same	active
Leonard McCoy	2	W	M	Warren Cty., KY	supt., Colquitt Cty., Ga*	active
Michael Oder	2	W	M	Frankfort, KY	same	active
Roland Chevalier	2	B	M	St. Martin Parish, LA	associate, CLSR **	associate
Malcolm Duplantis	2	W	M	Assumption Parish, LA	same	active
Patsy Jenkins	2	W	F	Rapides Parish, LA	same	associate
Peggy Campbell	2	W	F	Cleveland, MS	professor, Delta St.Univ.*	associate
James Hutto	2	W	M	Petal, MS	same	active
Janet McLin	2	W	F	Meridien, MS	same	active
Jayne Sargent	2	B	F	Jackson, MS	same	active
Bob Bowers	2	W	M	Buncombe Cty., NC	Ohio DOE *	associate
Randy Bridges	2	B	M	Orange Cty., NC	same	active
Neil Pedersen	2	W	M	Chapel Hill-Carrboro, NC	same	active
Carlinda Purcell	2	B	F	Warren Cty., NC	same	active
Stephen Hefner	2	W	M	Richland II, SC	same	associate
Sharon Keesley	2	W	F	Edgefield Cty., SC	same	associate
Vicki Phelps	2	W	F	Laurens Cty., SC	supt., Taylor, TX*	active

* = voluntary position change ** = involuntary position change originally

APPENDIX B

Institute Meetings 1997-2001

October 1997	Peachtree City (Atlanta) GA <i>Focus:</i> Norms and expectations of the Network; Framing the work; Creating a legacy <i>Site visits:</i> BellSouth EdTech Center and CNN <i>Presenter:</i> Duane Ackerman, BellSouth CEO <i>Reading:</i> <i>Inventing Better Schools</i> , by Phillip Schlechty
January 1998	Orlando FL <i>Focus:</i> "What do we mean by 'school reform'?" Superintendent as internal/external "marketer" <i>Presenter:</i> Disney Institute.
May 1998	Charlotte NC <i>Focus:</i> State policy issues/impact on district reform; Reframing problems Superintendent as community leader in a changing South <i>Site visit:</i> Charlotte business community <i>Presenters:</i> Peter Appelbome, New York Times and author James Dykes, former VA Secretary of Education and attorney <i>Readings:</i> <i>Rising Dixie</i> , by Peter Appelbome
October 1998	Peachtree City (Atlanta) GA <i>Focus:</i> Superintendent as communicator of system beliefs and values Impact of emerging technologies on the core business <i>Site visits:</i> BellSouth EdTech Center and NationsBank Operations Center <i>Presenters:</i> John Robinson, President, BellSouth.net Daniel Rizer, Anderson Consulting/Accenture Panel: BellSouth.net, BellSouth Entertainment, BellSouth Business Systems <i>Reading:</i> <i>House Divided</i> , by Mark Gershon
January 1999	Biloxi MS <i>Focus:</i> "What is our core business?" Beliefs and values that support the core business Superintendent's role in system focus on the core business <i>Site visits:</i> NASA Stennis Space Center and Naval Oceanographic Center Ingalls Shipbuilding <i>Presenters:</i> Governor William Winter Richard Thompson, MS State Superintendent Business leaders' panel: MS Power, Ingalls, DuPont-White
May 1999	Louisville KY <i>Focus:</i> Understanding the past, anticipating the future Focusing schools and principals on quality student work <i>Site visits:</i> Englehard Elementary School, Churchill Downs <i>Presenters:</i> Jerry Abramson, Mayor of Louisville <i>Reading:</i> <i>The Community of the Future</i> , by Peter Drucker
October 1999	Peachtree City (Atlanta) GA <i>Focus:</i> Analyzing and reflecting on leadership roles and styles Continuity and succession planning in a healthy organization Superintendent as a state education leader Impact of emerging technologies on the core business <i>Site visit:</i> Scientific Atlanta <i>Presenters:</i> Ronald Heifetz, Kennedy School, Harvard University Rosemary Slider, BellSouth Assessment Center Governors' Advisors from five SE states Steve Necessary, VP, Scientific Atlanta Bob Frame and Rick Butgereit, BellSouth Business Systems <i>Reading:</i> <i>Leadership Without Easy Answers</i> , by Ronald Heifetz

APPENDIX B

January 2000	New Orleans LA
<i>Focus:</i>	Reframing the accountability question "What do students say about their work?"
<i>Site visit:</i>	New Orleans as reflective of the changing South
<i>Presenters:</i>	Columbia Group members Student focus group
<i>Reading:</i>	<i>Leading Change</i> , by John Cotter

April 2000	Birmingham AL
<i>Focus:</i>	Addressing the legacy of race Focusing on the future – changing an organization to meet the future needs of customers, by fostering cross-disciplinary/cross-community collaboration and using emerging technologies Teachers' voices on designing quality student work
<i>Site visits:</i>	Birmingham Civil Rights Institute 16th Street Baptist Church University of Alabama-Birmingham – Medical Center CORD/McWane Science Center
<i>Presenters:</i>	Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth Ed Lamont, historian Odessa Woolfolk, Birmingham Civil Rights Institute Richard Arrington, former Mayor UAB team: 5 Medical Center professors/directors Teacher panel

October 2000	Peachtree City (Atlanta) GA
<i>Focus:</i>	Communicating vision; Handling media Superintendent's role in "branding" a district identity "Where is the country in thinking about leadership issues?"
<i>Site visit:</i>	Atlanta tour
<i>Presenters:</i>	William Pate, VP-Advertising and Branding, BellSouth Foundation panel: Gates, Wallace, and Broad Foundations Gene Maeroff, Hechinger Institute, Columbia University Steve Farkas, Public Agenda Sidmel Estes-Sumpter, Fox5/WAGA-TV Reporters Panel: Tampa Tribune, Pittsburg Post-Gazette, New Orleans Time Picayune Editors Panel: Orlando Sentinel, Baton Rouge Advocate, Atlanta Journal-Constitution

January 2001	Orlando FL
<i>Focus:</i>	"Defining Events" that shape an organization's culture and tradition; Superintendents as strategic managers of culture and traditions Recruiting and inducting people into an organization Changing role of principals; principals' role in WOW
<i>Site visit:</i>	Disney Institute: Behind-the-Scenes tour
<i>Presenters:</i>	Panel of principals Disney staff
<i>Reading:</i>	<i>Shaking up The Schoolhouse</i> , by Phillip Schlechty

April 2001	Charleston SC
<i>Focus:</i>	Assessing SLN's impact and helping design a future SLN Embracing the past to focus on the future; Superintendent's role in continuous improvement
<i>Site visits:</i>	Middleton Place, Historic Charleston
<i>Presenters:</i>	Tom Stallings, President & CEO, Cambar Software William Youngblood, Charleston Chamber of Commerce Kim Brame, Creative Illusions

APPENDIX C

State Profiles

The Superintendents Leadership Network operated in nine states and had representation from 59 districts in the Southeast over the course of its four years, as some of the 56 invited superintendents moved to new districts. Each state organizes its educational system differently and districts vary greatly, both within and among states. The tables that follow provide some common information on each state: number of districts, district size by student enrollment, and racial and income data for students. Information about superintendents in each state includes average salary and tenure, gender, race and whether the district leader is elected or appointed. This information was gathered from the departments of education in each state. Most data is for the 1999–2000 school year.

Information for many of the districts served by Network members is also provided.* This allows for some understanding of how states compare with each other, how participating SLN districts within each state compare and how all participating districts compare with each other on the selected indicators. Given very different mandates for record-keeping in neighboring states, not all indicators are available for each state and district.

*As some superintendents moved and data became less accessible, a few districts are not represented here.

ALABAMA

All Districts (1999-2000)

Number of districts:	128
Pre-K – 12 enrollment:	730,000
Percent Minority:	38
Percent of children in poverty:	24.1

Size of districts by student number:					
1-999	1,000-4,999	5,000-9,999	10,000-24,999	25,000-99,999	100,000
1	91	25	7	4	0

SLN Districts (1999-2000 or 2000-2001)

District	Number of students	White	Black	Black/Other	Other	Free & reduced lunch
Birmingham Public Schools	38,000	4%	95%	–	1%	83%
Dallas County Public Schools	4,737	2%	75%	–	1%	76%
Decatur City Schools	8,884	62.84%	–	37.16%	–	39.34%
Mobile County Public Schools	65,396	47.33%	49.97%	–	2.70%	63.30%
Mountain Brook Schools	3,940	98%	–	2%	–	0%
Talledega County Schools	7,816	59%	–	41%	–	60%

All Superintendents (1999-2000)

Number of elected superintendents:	40
Number of appointed superintendents:	88
Average salary:	\$90,296

		Alabama's 128 Superintendents	SLN Superintendents
Gender	Male	110	5
	Female	18	2
Ethnicity	White	112	4
	Black	16	3

FLORIDA

Districts (1999–2000)

Number of districts:	67
Pre-K – 12 enrollment:	2,400,000
Percent Minority:	45
Percent of children in poverty:	21.9

Size of districts by student number:					
1-999	1,000-4,999	5,000-9,999	10,000-24,999	25,000-99,999	100,000
0	19	12	10	19	7

SLN Districts (1999–2000)

District	Number of students	White	Black	Other	Free & reduced lunch
Citrus County Public Schools	14,888	90.4%	4.79%	4.81%	41.43%
Monroe County Schools	9,420	68.96%	9.06%	21.98%	35%
Seminole County Public Schools	59,333	68.97%	13.98%	17.04%	25.07%
St. Lucie County Schools	29,047	61%	30%	12.5%	53.24%

All Superintendents (1999–2000)

Number of elected superintendents:	44
Number of appointed superintendents:	23
Average base salary:	\$102,395

		Florida's 67 Superintendents	SLN Superintendents
Gender	Male	60	5
	Female	7	0
Ethnicity	White	65	5
	Black	1	0
	Hispanic	1	0

GEORGIA

Districts (1999-2000)

Number of districts:	180
Pre-K – 12 enrollment:	1,400,000
Percent Minority:	44
Percent of children in poverty:	23.3

Size of districts by student number:					
1-999	1,000-4,999	5,000-9,999	10,000-24,999	25,000-99,999	100,000
12	107	29	23	9	0

SLN Districts (1999-2000 or 2000-2001)

District	Number of students	White	Black	Other	Free & reduced lunch
Atlanta Public Schools	56,461	6%	91%	3%	68%
Clayton County Schools	45,179	27%	64.97%	8.03%	54.28%
Dalton Public Schools	5,265	33%	8%	59%	?%
Forsyth County Schools	15,645	95.12%	0.26%	4.61%	12%
Habersham County Schools	5,049	93.25%	2.38%	4.38%	33%
Sumter County Public Schools	5,681	25.07%	73.67%	1.26%	100%

All Superintendents (1999-2000)

Number of elected superintendents:	0
Number of appointed superintendents:	180
Average salary 1999-2000:	\$99,872.55

		Georgia's 180 Superintendents	SLN Superintendents
Gender	Male	146	4
	Female	34	3
Ethnicity	White	163	4
	Black	18	3

KENTUCKY

Districts (1999-2000)

Number of districts:	176
Pre-K – 12 enrollment:	637,000
Percent Minority:	11
Percent of children in poverty:	18.6

Size of districts by student number:					
1-999	1,000-4,999	5,000-9,999	10,000-24,999	25,000-99,999	100,000
32	119	16	7	1	1

SLN Districts (1999-2000)

District	Number of students	White	Black	Black/Other	Other	Free & reduced lunch
Daviess County Public Schools	10,075	97%	–	3%	–	31%
Frankfort Independent Schools	1,000	75%	22%	–	3%	44%
Jefferson County Public Schools	95,000	65%	34%	–	1%	48%
Jessamine County Public Schools	6,625	95%	4%	–	1%	39%
Oldham County Public Schools	8,572	95%	3.10%	–	1.9%	14%
Warren County Public Schools	10,872	87%	8%	–	5%	34%

All Superintendents (1999-2000)

Number of elected superintendents:	0
Number of appointed superintendents:	176
Average base salary:	\$81,840

		Kentucky's 176 Superintendents	SLN Superintendents
Gender	Male	161	6
	Female	15	1
Ethnicity	White	176	7
	Black	0	0

LOUISIANA

Districts (1999-2000)

Number of districts:	66
Pre-K – 12 enrollment:	710,000
Percent Minority:	50
Percent of children in poverty:	29.2

Size of districts by student number:					
1-999	1,000-4,999	5,000-9,999	10,000-24,999	25,000-99,999	100,000
4	29	15	15	7	0

SLN Districts (1999-2000)

District	Number of students	White	Black	Black/other	Other	Free & reduced lunch
Assumption Parish Schools	4,814	55.07%	44.02%	—	.92%	66%
Jefferson Parish Schools	52,900	41.89%	46.18%	—	11.93%	66.97%
Rapides Parish Schools	24,346	56%	42%	—	2%	61%
St. Charles Parish Schools	10,070	64%	—	36%	—	57.90%
St. Martin Parish Schools	8,757	51.40%	47.30%	—	1.30%	69%

All Superintendents (1999-2000)

Number of elected superintendents:	0
Number of appointed superintendents:	66
Average base salary:	\$79,463

		Louisiana's 66 Superintendents	SLN Superintendents
Gender	Male	56	4
	Female	10	1
Ethnicity	White	59	4
	Black	7	1

MISSISSIPPI

Districts (1999-2000)

Number of districts:	152
Pre-K – 12 enrollment:	499,000
Percent Minority:	52
Percent of children in poverty:	21.6

Size of districts by student number:					
1-999	1,000-4,999	5,000-9,999	10,000-24,999	25,000-99,999	100,000
17	112	19	3	1	0

SLN Districts (1999-2000 or 2000-2001)

District	Number of students	White	Black	Other	Free & reduced lunch
Cleveland School District	3,988	28.11%	71.89%	–	72%
Gulfport School District	6,750	50%	50%	–	60%
Jackson Public School District	31,384	7.24%	92.28%	–	76.8%
Meridian Public School District	7,151	24%	75%	1%	71%
Pass Christian Schools	1,897	59%	37%	4%	68%
Petal School District	3,686	90%	9%	1%	41%

All Superintendents (1999-2000)

Number of elected superintendents:	65
Number of appointed superintendents:	84
Average base salary 1999-2000:	\$80,749

		Mississippi's 149 Superintendents	SLN Superintendents
Gender	Male	117	5
	Female	31	3
Ethnicity	White	?	5
	Black	?	3

NORTH CAROLINA

Districts (1999–2000)

Number of districts:	117
Pre-K – 12 enrollment:	1,300,000
Percent Minority:	37
Percent of children in poverty:	21.3

Size of districts by student number:					
1-999	1,000-4,999	5,000-9,999	10,000-24,999	25,000-99,999	100,000
5	48	31	29	7	0

SLN Districts (1999–2000 or 2000–2001)

District	Number of students	White	Black	Other	Free & reduced lunch
Buncombe County Public Schools	24,500	90.38%	5.3%	4.31%	26.69%
Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools	10,070	68%	16%	16%	16%
Charlotte-Mecklenberg Schools	97,586	49.3%	41.9%	8.8%	36.6%
Durham Public Schools	28,922	34.2%	56.6%	9.2%	35.92%
Granville County Schools	7,906	56%	38%	6%	45%
Orange County Schools	6,223	74%	23%	3%	26%
Warren County Schools	3,500	20%	74%	6%	65.6%

All Superintendents (1999–2000)

Number of elected superintendents:	0
Number of appointed superintendents:	117
Average base salary 1999–2000:	\$92,664 ³

		North Carolina's 117 Superintendents	SLN Superintendents
Gender	Male	117	4
	Female	31	3
Ethnicity	White	98	5
	Black	11	2
	Native American	3	0

³ The State of North Carolina pays base teacher and administrator salary. The amount listed above is the average base salary of superintendents. It does not include any system supplements, bonuses or incentives paid beyond the base.

SOUTH CAROLINA

Districts (1999-2000)

Number of districts:	86
Pre-K – 12 enrollment:	647,000
Percent Minority:	43
Percent of children in poverty:	18.1

Size of districts by student number:					
1-999	1,000-4,999	5,000-9,999	10,000-24,999	25,000-99,999	100,000
6	46	19	14	5	0

SLN Districts (1999-2000 or 2000-2001)

District	Number of students	White	Black	Other	Free & reduced lunch
Anderson School District #5	10,760	64%	35%	1%	26.69%
Charleston School District	41,341	39%	58%	3%	66%
Edgefield County School District	4,111	48%	51%	1%	37.9%
Laurens County School District #56	3,468	57%	42%	1%	52.8%
Lexington School District	16,831	90%	7%	3%	26%
Richland School District #2	16,176	46%	49%	5%	26%

All Superintendents (1999-2000)

Number of elected superintendents:	1
Number of appointed superintendents:	85
Average salary:	\$94,772

		South Carolina's 83 Superintendents	SLN Superintendents
Gender	Male	69	3
	Female	14	3
Ethnicity	White	65	5
	Black/other	18	1

TENNESSEE

Districts (1999-2000)

Number of districts:	138
Pre-K – 12 enrollment:	909,000
Percent Minority:	26
Percent of children in poverty:	18.1

Size of districts by student number:					
1-999	1,000-4,999	5,000-9,999	10,000-24,999	25,000-99,999	100,000
18	78	26	10	4	1

SLN Districts (1999-2000 or 2000-2001)

District	Number of students	White	Black	Other	Free & reduced lunch
Blount County Schools	10,560	97.7%	1.3%	1%	32.23%
Knoxville Public Schools	57,062	83%	14%	3%	31.26%
Memphis City Schools	111,139	12.3%	85.4%	2.3%	68.74%
Williamson County Schools	18,199	92.8%	4.2%	3%	5.68%

All Superintendents (1999-2000)

Number of elected superintendents:	0
Number of appointed superintendents:	138
Average salary:	\$77,178

		Tennessee's 138 Superintendents	SLN Superintendents
Gender	Male	120	3
	Female	18	1
Ethnicity	White	134	3
	Black	4	1

APPENDIX D

Contact Information

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There are many lessons still to be learned about how new roles and strategies of leadership contribute to student achievement and finally result in fundamental change of the public education system as a whole.



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