



Balanced Leadership® work unites Cleveland schools

The Challenge

School leaders in Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD)—a large and diverse urban district affected by high poverty, low achievement, violence, high mobility, declining enrollment, and inconsistent funding—struggled to raise student achievement. With a goal to become a “premier school district in the United States,” the district needed a common vocabulary for its leaders so they could have meaningful conversations focused on academic achievement and professional development that would change practice.

Strategic Solution

To ground all of their building- and district-level leaders in the latest research on leadership, CMSD turned to McREL, who worked with the Cuyahoga County Educational Service Center to tailor a plan for training 112 Pre-K–12 principals on 21 responsibilities of effective leadership positively associated with student achievement. Collaborating with the district, McREL consultants conducted strategic review meetings and worked with smaller groups of principals, providing “on-the-ground” coaching and support while holding principals accountable for their learning.

Results

A shared, research-based vocabulary now grounds CMSD principals and helps them apply key concepts from McREL’s *Balanced Leadership Framework*® to the district’s goals and teachers’ practices. The Framework provides the content and tools for school and district leaders to focus on doing the right work and to connect with one another.

Next Steps

In 2008, CMSD continued with a second year of training. Using the *Balanced Leadership Profile*® online survey tool, principals learned the extent to which they each fulfilled the 21 responsibilities of effective school leaders. McREL consultants helped the district develop the capacity needed to deliver professional development independent of McREL.

Creating high-expectation, high-performance school cultures

A school's culture can make or break any reform effort, even one that is otherwise well planned and focused on the right things. McREL offers leadership development, as well as intensive school improvement services, to help school leaders create cultures of high expectations.

Leadership development

McREL's Balanced Leadership helps school leaders focus their schools on making the right changes, manage those changes effectively, and create purposeful school communities committed to excellence. Our one- to three-year professional development program teaches principals how to balance and share the 21 research-based responsibilities of highly effective leaders and includes sessions on Developing a Purposeful Community, Managing Change, and Choosing the Right Focus.

We also offer Balanced Leadership directly to school leaders or as a training-of-trainers program.

Related services

Based on years of research and experience, McREL's **Success in Sight**® approach to school improvement delivers quick results—and lasting change—in student achievement by helping schools use data to focus their improvement efforts and create school cultures that are committed to excellence and continuous improvement.

For more information, visit mcrel.org/balancedleadership or mcrel.org/successinsight, or e-mail info@mcrel.org.

