

**Committee to Improve Professional Relationships  
Prioritization of Bruce Wellman's March 2012 Goals  
June 5, 2012**

**I. A Culture of High Expectations**

1. To create a sense of the whole and answer the question, "Where are we going?" ---develop a cohesive graphic image of the desired state of the high performing district. The graphic should display goals, essential processes, interconnections and key points of interaction. Use the graphic to identify organizational and professional capacities that are needed to produce and sustain the desired state. These include, but are not limited to, high levels of assessment and data literacy, the collaborative skills to work with assessment results and modify instruction accordingly, mentoring skills and supervisory skills.

Short-term goal to start and Long-term goal  
(Short-term = 1 year and Long-term = 3 to 5 years)

- 2a. Clarify priorities to address issues of overload and fragmentation.

Short-term goal

- 2b. Connect current initiatives to the change research to develop a clearer image of the state of each initiative. Identify initiatives that are district, school and teacher driven. Major efforts such as the work of professional learning communities, data teams, social-emotional programs, assessment, curriculum reviews, and literacy and numeracy instruction are all at different stages of the change process in different settings in the district. Each major initiative needs to be assessed and compared to the stages of change mentioned earlier in the report. Projects tend to stall out at the Stage 3 management level (noted in the table on page 8) if there are no detailed assessments of implementation practices and levels of use. These assessments need to measure both frequency of use of the new practices and the quality of implementation. These assessments should then be used to target professional learning needs, to guide professional development decision-making and to focus mentoring and coaching efforts.

Long-term goal

3. For all proposed new initiatives and program changes, create an "environmental impact statement" naming the change implications, ripple effects on current practices and the impacts of these on staff members.

Long-term goal

4. To get a firmer handle on the issue of workload, develop impact case studies for selected teachers and staff members. Use time logs and schedules to track a typical day. Create a graphic with the selected staff members at the center and draw lines connecting to all the projects, initiatives and work processes that flow through their days. Use this information in concert with the identification of the stage of change related to current initiatives to frame the difficult conversation about reasonable workloads and the potential need to adjust the pace of change in the district and/or the number of initiatives in the system.

Long-term goal

5. The district is ultimately faced with the dilemma of balancing time and tasks. Three approaches need to be considered to address this dilemma 1) Prioritize projects – the principle of first things first 2) Increase efficiency – work smarter not harder 3) Find more time – adjust the schedule, length of the work day and/or the calendar to match values and priorities.

Long-term goal

## II. Collaborating for Success

6. Collaboration is a skill set that cannot be assumed all administrators and staff members possess. The sometimes-messy process of working together in new ways takes time, explicit teaching, monitoring and assessing. There is a need to clarify the expectations and skill sets required in critical work settings in the district and develop targeted training in the skills of collaboration. This process was begun through the meetings with principals held with Dr. Ash and Mr. Wellman and will be shared with staff at their next faculty meeting. As mentioned above, one essential need is to develop clear criteria for assessing team skills. All parties need to be accountable for applying these skills in these settings and reinforcing peer-to-peer accountability for group processes and task success. For supervisors, there is a need for skill building to know when and how to intervene with low performing groups.

Short-term and Long-term goal

7. Develop the meeting design and facilitation skills of administrators, key department supervisors and teacher leaders. Well-run meetings are very similar to well-crafted classroom lessons. They require clear outcomes, a process agenda and the facilitation skills to encourage full engagement to support participants in processing information and managing effective decisions. Groups need a shared repertoire of meeting tools, clear understanding of meeting roles and when groups are large, skillful facilitation.

Short-term goal (special education department) and long-term goal for other departments

8. Administrators and staff members need skills and tools for managing difficult conversations and working confidently with conflict. Conflict is an essential part of the collaborative process. The key distinction is between cognitive conflict and affective conflict. Cognitive conflict produces better thinking and better products. Affective or interpersonal conflict damages both relationships and the work. One targeted intervention would be to have key administrators and key members of the Lexington Education Association leadership group participate in joint training and learning about how to engage in difficult conversations. This would include skills for one-to-one conversations and conversations in small groups. This could then be expanded into training all employees.

Short-term goal

9. Jointly identify key terms that need to be clarified to organize a productive working relationship between the LEA and administrative team. Some key terms include: partnership, collaboration, rights and responsibilities. These essential terms need to mean the same thing to both parties and there is a profound need for agreement about how these concepts translate into daily actions.

Short-term

10. Clarify the working relationship between principals and special education administrators. This would include clarity about roles, responsibilities processes related to essential decisions about student services with particular emphasis on exploring ways to make more timely and efficient decisions.

Long-term goal

### **III. Leadership Capacities**

11. Review and clarify essential understandings about decision-making processes and the differing levels of participation in decisions. The ultimate questions are, “Who decides?” and “What process will we be using?” These processes need to be communicated clearly to develop common understandings of ways to participate appropriately. One important aspect of successful decision-making is to include the voices and input of those parties most affected by the potential decision.

Short-term and long-term goal

12. Support district leaders in developing group leadership skills for framing tasks and decisions. These include design and delivery skills for naming the core purposes or the ‘whys’ of projects and initiatives, naming essential tasks and relational outcomes that will be achieved by successful project completion, clarifying the boundaries or nonnegotiable elements related to the project and naming the benefits that will result for project participants.

Short-term goal

13. Expand opportunities to develop leadership skills by all staff members. These include leadership of committees, professional learning communities, work teams and adult learning groups. Essential knowledge includes knowledge of adult learning, group development, presentation skills and facilitation skills.

Short-term goal

14. Collaboratively develop clear decision-making criteria for special education student programming decisions. These need to be tested against legal requirements and the knowledge-base on current best practices in the related specialty areas. Staff will then need to learn to collaboratively apply these criteria to test cases as a means of developing the process skills for managing these important decisions.

Long-term goal

May 29, 2012