Leading for Educational Change in the 21st Century

Brandman University
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“We have to change our whole mindset in this country. We’re living in a 21st century knowledge economy, but our schools, our homes, and our culture are still based around 20th century expectations”

Barak Obama (2005)

What is 21st Century Education?
The acquisition of the knowledge & skills needed to **thrive** in a world where change is constant and learning never stops.

**External Change Drivers**

- Technology & Digital Lifestyles
- Globalization & the Speed of Knowledge
- The Knowledge Age
- New Research on the Science of Learning

*“The Perfect Learning Storm”* (Tilling & Fadel, 2009)
The Knowledge Age

- Follows the Industrial Age
- Flat World Concept
- Globalization connects markets, people, information
- Digital Communication
- Blended Cultural Traditions
- Complex Job Market
- Work = Internet Connection

“Permanent Whitewater”

We cannot predict the world or the jobs our students will need to be able to navigate!

Changing at unprecedented speed

“Rapid & Profound Change”
“Digital Natives”
The first generation of children to grow up surrounded by and immersed in digital media.

New set of expectations for school and for life

- customized
- personalized
- instant information
- high speed communication
- entertaining
- innovative
- collaborative
- Interactive

“New ways to make learning interactive, personalized, collaborative, creative, and innovative are needed to engage and keep the digital natives actively learning in schools”

(Trilling & Fadel, 2009)

New Research about Learning

- Authentic Learning in a real-world context
- Model building
- Internal motivation
- Multiple intelligences
- Social learning
- Growth Mindset

Pathways for genuine Learning
Transformational Change

“Transformation is a radical shift of strategy, structure, systems, processes, or technology, so significant that it requires a shift of culture, behavior, and mindset to implement successfully and sustain over time” (Anderson, 2010)
Transformational Change Requires Transformational Leadership

If there is one factor that distinguishes successful 21st century schools and districts it is strong leadership. While individual teachers can adopt the practices of 21st century classroom, the real impact on students is if an entire school and district embraces and works toward the same vision (Kay & Greenhill, 2013).

Inquiring Minds Want to Know...

When thinking about district-wide change for 21st Century Education,

1) Does district leadership matter?
2) How have leaders of P21 Exemplar Districts led?

Purpose of my Study

The purpose of my qualitative study was to describe how superintendents of exemplar 21st century school districts implemented 21st century models of education in their districts by identifying the change drivers, visions, frameworks of 21st century skills, major initiatives, strategies, and change models used in the implementation of this type of transformational change.
Eight District Case Studies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Number</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years as Superintendent in current district</th>
<th>Estimated size of district in terms of pupil count</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>District Setting</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>3,800</td>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12,300</td>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Case Study Questions:

- Vision
- Understanding of Change
- 21st Century Initiatives
- Strategies of Leadership
- Barriers

Findings & Conclusions...
1. Superintendents as Leaders

- Conscious and intentional change leaders of 21st century change
- Deep personal convictions and beliefs about students and education
- Clearly articulated visions
- Well-read and immersed in current research
- Intuitive about leading change
- Unwavering belief in people as learners
- Relentlessly student-centered

2. Vision

- The superintendents in this study were articulate and passionate when talking about their visions.
- Each vision was a unique expression of each superintendent’s leadership
- The vision served as the focus of the work and the non-negotiable component around which the more flexible components could turn.

The Vision Drives:

- Hiring
- Resource Allocation
- Professional Development
3. Community

- More than "lip service" to the practice of community engagement
- Community served as the natural starting point and definer of the process in a continual feedback loop
- Assessing the needs, culture, value came BEFORE planning or designing

4. Systems Thinking & Transformational Change

Superintendents in this study leaned heavily towards perceptions of systems thinking change. Furthermore, they all possessed an understanding of their work as transformational change and a perception of themselves as transformational leaders.

5. Organic Change Process

Each superintendent took what they believed to be true about the change process and tailored it to the unique needs, demographics, and cultures of their districts.
Organic Change Process (con’t)

They used a process by which they gathered input from the community, worked with key stakeholders to define what 21st century education should look like in their individual districts, and then seamed together parts of many different frameworks to create their own unique model.

6. The Superintendent-Principal Relationship

–The superintendents in this study reported that the relationship with their principals was a critical factor in the ability to effectively execute change (Loose-tight leadership)

7. 21st Century Initiatives

1. Global & Cultural Literacy
2. College & Career Readiness
3. Standards-based Instruction & Assessment
4. Personalized Learning
5. Technology Integration
Initiatives → Student Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Student Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Global &amp; Cultural Literacy</td>
<td>A Global Perspective</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>An innate respect/appreciation for cultural diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College &amp; Career Readiness</td>
<td>Soft Skills (4 C’s) for workplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigorous Standards</td>
<td>Success in College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalized Learning</td>
<td>Expertise on topics of high interest to them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology Integration</td>
<td>Technological literacy/digital citizenship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Transformational Change is Hard!

“That’s why educational change doesn’t always happen. You have to believe in it; that’s the easy part. The hard part is being consistent and being there over time to see through the change. It’s so hard. I get why education doesn’t change. You have to be strong but you also have to be willing to adapt, reflect, and change yourself.”

( Participant 5)

Leading Change...

Leaders of innovative organizations don’t sit by the side of the road to wait and see if an idea succeeds or fails. They step forward and contribute to the process; they blaze the trail.
Questions & Comments

Thank you