

## Conceptualizing and Evaluating Professional Development for School Leaders

Ellen Goldring  
Department of Leadership, Policy and Organizations  
Peabody College, Vanderbilt University  
Nashville, Tennessee USA

Asia Leadership Roundtable  
Hong Kong Institute of Education  
January 2010



## My Arguments

- There is widespread convergence regarding components of ambitious, high quality, formal professional development for school leaders

HOWEVER

- We have almost no empirical evaluations of the relationships between professional development, these components, and any outcomes for leaders, teachers, students or schools

## Lack of Empirical Evidence

- The lack of empirical evidence is the result of:
  - Poor conceptualization and theories of change
  - Limited measures
  - Weak research designs

## ● Together this has left us with

- Assumptions about what works
- Limited knowledge about how to help leaders develop the expertise and practices they need to engage their challenging environments

– *“Ten or 15 more years of “researching” as we have done to date will take us nowhere beyond the present”* (Kottkamp & Rusch, 2009, p 80).

## What Are the Components of High Quality Professional Development?

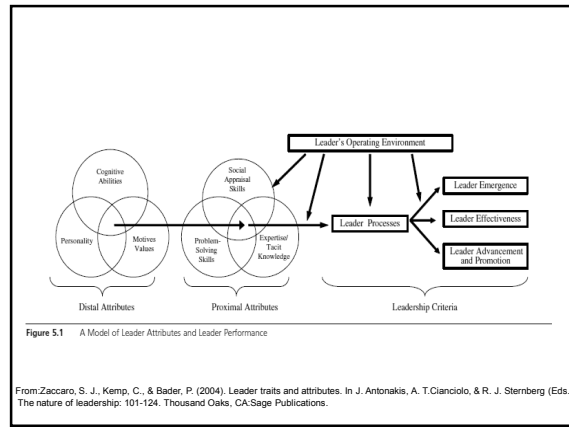
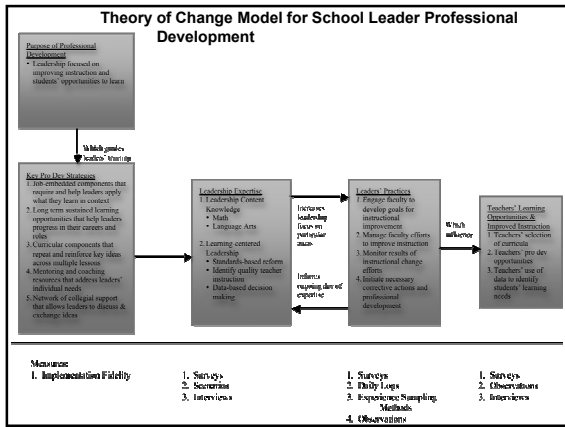
### Do You Agree?

- Job-embedded instruction that allows participants to apply what they learn.
- Content that addresses leaders' unique needs for their individual stages in their careers.
- Long-term instruction with multiple learning opportunities and feedback
- Coherent curriculum that targets conditions leaders face every day
- Collegial networks and/or support to discuss and exchange ideas

## What is Theory Based Evaluation?

### Do We Need This Type of Evaluation?

- The mechanisms or the ways in which professional development experiences can influence school leaders and subsequently their teachers, students, and schools
- Knowing what a program expects to achieve, but also how
- “The mechanism of change is not the program activities per se but the response that the activities generate” (p. 73). --Carol Weiss



### How Can We Better Conceptualize and Measure? Do You Agree This is Needed?

If we take seriously the notion of theory based program evaluation:

- Valid and reliable measures of mediators are needed
- Multiple methodologies that are aligned with the theory of change

### Examples

- End of Day Logs
- Experience Sampling Methods
- 360 degree
- Scenarios

**CPRE** Center for Policy Research in Education Study of School Leadership

**Principal Daily Web Log Test**  
 For Wednesday, 4/26/2006  
 Today is Thursday, 9/26/2006

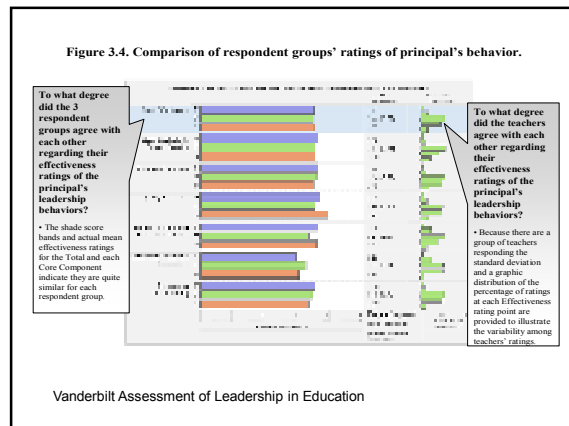
If at any time you need help, please call 734-647-6558 for assistance.  
 If you leave the survey before you complete it, please click on save.

2. Please indicate when and for how long you worked on each of the following areas today. Within each hour block in which you worked on an area, indicate whether you worked on it for:

1 = 1-14 minutes; 2 = 15-29 minutes; 3 = 30-44 minutes; 4 = 45 minutes to 1 hour

	5-7 am	7-8 am	8-9 am	9-10 am	10-11 am	11-12 pm	12-1 pm	1-2 pm	2-3 pm	3-4 pm	4-5 pm	5-6 pm	6-7 pm	After 7pm
<b>Building operations</b> (purchases, space allocation, facility maintenance, security)														
<b>Finances and financial support for the school</b> (preparing budget, budget report, meeting grants, managing contracts)														
<b>Community or parent relations</b> (normal meetings and informal interactions)														
<b>School district functions</b>														
<b>Student affairs</b> (attendance, discipline, counseling, individualized learning)														
<b>Personnel issues</b> (recruiting, hiring, supervising, evaluating, problem solving)														
<b>Planning/setting goals</b> (school improvement planning, developing goals)														
<b>Instructional leadership</b> (consulting or observing instruction, direct involvement in class, supporting teacher professional development, analyzing student data to determine, making instructional practices, leading a team)														
<b>Your professional growth</b> (normal professional development, attending classes at college/university, making effort on your own)														
<b>Other</b> (please specify)														

Please specify all others in line order below



**Weak Research Designs-Do We Agree?**

- Small,
- Atheoretical
- Case studies
- Ad hoc
- Isolated
- Convenience based

Not building a knowledge base

**Can We Change the Status Quo?**

**Call to Action**

- Programmatic research
- Shared Agenda
- Larger scale
- Longitudinal
- More rigorous designs
- Experimental designs (compared to what?)
- Driven by clear hypotheses
- Conceptually underpinned
- Rooted in measures linked to mechanisms