December 2011

BBA Launched NGVSZ Leadership Initiative

On December 17, 2011 BBA launched a Leadership Initiative for the NGVSZ principals and teachers leaders at each school. The LI is funded by the Newark Trust for Education. The LI was developed to expand the leadership team across the NGVSZ and further the development of 1) instructional leadership among principals, 2) administrator and teacher collaboration, and 3) teacher leadership.

School effectiveness research over the past twenty years has repeatedly affirmed the role of principals’ leadership in school. Principals remain key individuals as instructional leaders, initiators of change, school managers, personnel administrators, problem solvers, and boundary spanners. Effective leaders engage in ongoing opportunities for continuous growth by participating in inquiry and study groups as well as formal opportunities to improve their skills and knowledge and create many opportunities for educators at all levels to engage in dialogue, planning, action, and reflection as a cycle of learning to improve student achievement (Shen 2001); provide opportunities for, and participate in, groups where the challenges of instructional leadership can be solved; (Fullan, 2001), gain greater understanding of why, when and how to create learning environments that support people, connect them with one another, and provide the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to succeed (Waters, et. al., 2003); and provide support for aspiring and first-year administrators to increase the probability of their success on the job (Lambert, 2002).

During a period of considerable uncertainty in district leadership, the NGVSZ principals have played a critical role in developing and shaping the progress of the NGVSZ. Their leadership continues to be essential to setting the direction for the success of NGVSZ. In addition to working with principals BBA has expanded school leadership development to include assistant principals, department chairs, coaches, and teacher leaders, thereby increasing the leadership density of the NGVSZ.

Teacher Leadership

The development of leadership capacity among teachers is critical. Teacher leadership is important for the following three reasons: 1) advancing a rigorous instructional and curricula agenda across the NGVSZ; 2) increasing leadership density within the NGVSZ schools; and, 3) building teacher support for the NGVSZ.

Research on effective professional development programs identify the following characteristics: a focus on a clear set of priorities; the provision of ongoing, school-based support to classroom teachers; a combined focus on academic content as well as teaching methods; and the creation of ample opportunities for teachers to see and attempt new teaching methods, according to many experts (National Staff Development Council, 2001). The more "extended" or ongoing and continuous the professional development, the more it encourages effective classroom practices (Wenglinsky, 2000). Further,
teachers with a high sense of their own efficacy are more likely to adopt new classroom behaviors and also more likely to stay in the profession (McLaughlin and Talbert, 1993; Rosenholtz, 1989). McLaughlin and Talbert (1993) found that when teachers had opportunities for collaborative inquiry and the learning related to it, they were able to develop and share a body of wisdom gleaned from their experience.

The School Leadership Development Initiative includes the following components:

I. **Leadership Coaches:** As part of the LI Leadership Coaches are assigned to each NGVSZ school. Leadership Coaches support administrator and teacher leadership development. Leadership Coaches conduct school walkthroughs with each principal once a month. The walkthroughs are focused on observing the instructional coherence, pedagogical practices, and student engagement in each classroom. Leadership Coaches debrief with principals and discuss instructional feedback, as well as gaps in the implementation of the elements of the instructional system.

II. **Leadership Seminars:** Metro Center is providing a series of 8 intensive Leadership Seminars for current administrators and teacher leaders over the 2011-2012 school-year. The seminars are developed based on the needs and goals identified at each school and the input of school leaders (administrators and teachers). They are designed to support problem-solving around instructional leadership, data analysis, and the development of a coherent and rigorous instructional program at each NGVSZ school and across the NGVSZ. The first and last seminars are six-hour sessions held in September and June at New York University; the other six seminars will be two-three hour sessions held each month from October to May at Rutgers University-Newark. Facilitators of these sessions will include the Leadership Coaches, as well as Metro Center’s diverse staff of experienced urban educators, and nationally known experts. The Leadership Coaches and Metro Center will continue to work with administrators and teacher leaders as they return to their schools to apply the skills they have learned. Research carried out in other school districts has shown that this type of collective process of reflection can enhance the ability of school leaders to become more effective instructional leaders (Elmore).

III. **NGVSZ Leadership Institute:** The NGVSZ Leadership Institute will be conducted again in July/August of 2012 and operate for one full week. During the course of the week, administrators and teachers will move through the summer program as a cohort, take classes in organizational theory and other topics taught by faculty from NYU and the other university partners, and examine data from the NGVSZ data system to guide the implementation of a their schools’ action plan. Topics will vary based on the development and input of the NGVSZ principals throughout the year.