Building a new structure for school leadership
HGSE Professor Richard Elmore

Unless there is a radical change in the structure of school leadership, few schools will be able to rise to the challenge of enabling all students to meet high standards, says Anrig Professor of Educational Leadership Richard F. Elmore. With accountability standards creating more public scrutiny than ever before, educational leaders must focus their efforts on instruction if they are to thrive and survive in the current conditions. Based on the essay "Building a New Structure for School Leadership," from Professor Elmore's book, School Reform from the Inside Out: Policy, Practice, and Performance (Harvard Education Press, 2004).

“Improvement, then, is change with direction, sustained over time, that moves entire systems, raising the average level of quality and performance while... engaging people in analysis and understanding of why some actions seem to work and others don’t.”

Principles for improvement
1. All leaders, regardless of role, should be working at the improvement of instructional practice and performance, rather than working to shield their institutions from outside interference.
2. All educators should take part in continuous learning, and be open to having their ideas and practices subjected to the scrutiny of their colleagues.
3. Leaders must be able to model the behaviors, the learning, and the instructional knowledge they seek from their teachers.
4. The roles and activities of leadership should flow from the differences in expertise among the individuals involved, not from the formal dictates of the institution.
5. Policymakers should discover and take into account the circumstances that make doing the work possible, and provide the resources necessary for improvement.

Elmore points out that large-scale improvement is a "property of organizations," not of the individuals who work for them, as the current system would have us believe. He lists several main themes that characterize high performing schools:

- "Continuity of focus on core instruction;"
- Heavy investments in highly targeted professional development for teachers and principals in the fundamentals of strong classroom instruction;
- Strong and explicit accountability ... for the quality of practice and the level of student performance...; and
- A normative climate in which adults take responsibility for their own, their colleagues', and their students' learning.”

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