



R&D

A L E R T

Leadership Development

enhancing the role of teachers

Scan any book of quotations for the subject of “leadership” and two things are clear: The topic has fascinated great thinkers for centuries, and the range of their definitions is broad. People seem to agree, however, that good leadership is the linchpin of any campaign, from the battlefield to the boardroom.

Developing leadership is particularly important in the ever-changing world of education. The notion of leadership in education typically brings to mind the work of principals, superintendents, and other administrators. But numerous WestEd projects have long recognized and sought to enhance the role of *teachers* in leading education reform.

“Teachers need to step up and take charge of instruction and learning. They need to be leaders of their own work,” observes Trudy Schoneman, Director of WestEd’s Instructional Leadership Initiative (ILI). And Cathy Carroll, co-principal investigator for WestEd’s Leadership Curriculum for Mathematics Professional Development (affiliated

with Mathematics Renaissance), adds, “The more internalized the work is, the more likely it is to carry on. That’s our goal, plain and simple.”

What it means to be a teacher leader

Developing teacher leadership has historically been viewed as a way of “filling the gaps.” Because there is such a wide and growing need for professional development in schools, increasing the number of teacher leaders is often considered vital for increasing the ranks of professional development providers.

However, teacher leadership programs are much more than just stop-gap measures. Carroll quotes researchers

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and **take charge** of
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their own work.



FROM THE CEO

As schools and districts face new and increasing challenges, effective leadership is needed more than ever.

The federal *No Child Left Behind* law and state-level, standards-based initiatives are placing new demands on educators. Student demographics are shifting rapidly. Many districts are reducing class sizes and face shortages of qualified teachers. Strong local leadership is key in guiding schools and districts through such changes.



IN SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS

Leaders do not often arrive in education settings fully developed. They must grow, practice, and update their knowledge and skills. Leaders need support from others and opportunities to learn from peers and keep current with research. And to support student learning, leaders need time and guidance for their own learning.

WestEd's leadership initiatives target the development and support of leaders throughout the education system. We work with school and district administrators, teacher leaders, and leaders of community-based organizations. This issue of *R&D Alert* shares a sampling of our work in this area.

The lead article focuses on teacher leaders. It describes the varied roles that teacher leaders fill and characteristics that make them effective in those roles. The article also explains elements of effective leadership development programs, such as customizing the program, being data-driven, and providing networking opportunities for participants.

An article on WestEd's Executive Leadership Center starts from the premise that superintendents need to be the "chief learners" in their districts. As such, they benefit from opportunities to learn from both research-based information and their peers in other districts.

We also examine a new WestEd publication that addresses how people develop into effective school leaders. The publication's descriptions of leadership elements provide a tool for cultivating better school leaders.

Finally, an article about a recent project of WestEd's Western Assessment Collaborative (WAC) describes what it takes to develop leadership throughout an entire district. The project focuses not only on individual development but also on improving policies and procedures across the district. WAC has also found it important to focus on the role of leaders as teachers, helping to spread their knowledge and practices throughout the district.

We hope the information in this issue about leadership development is useful in your own efforts to improve education for all students.

Glen H. Harvey
Chief Executive Officer



Descriptions of

LEADER- SHIP

in action

If, as is generally believed, most great schools have great principals, how can effective school leadership be defined? Finding an answer today, in this high-stakes, standards-based environment, is especially important.

A few years ago, WestEd collaborated with California education groups — including the Association of California School Administrators, the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, the California Department of Education, and the California Association of Professors of Educational Administration — to create the California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders.

The standards describe skills, attitudes, and behaviors of effective school administrators. Aligned with the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium standards, they provide a framework for the preparation, induction, support, evaluation, and recognition of principals and other leaders.

While many principals have found the standards useful, school leaders must determine how best to meet the standards within their particular school and district context, says WestEd program director Karen Kearney. What is needed, then, are not only standards, but guidance for developing effective practices aligned with the standards.

To accomplish this, WestEd — with input from the several groups that helped develop the original standards — has fleshed out the standards into a set of “Descriptions of Practice” for school leaders. The descriptions help guide, monitor, and support the work of school and district administrators, as well as those who wish to become such leaders.

Standard Two, for instance, indicates that school leaders are responsible for promoting “the success of all students” through the school’s instructional program and professional development. WestEd’s Descriptions of Practice expand upon this standard by breaking it into several components. Implementation of each component — including guiding the instructional program, promoting professional growth of staff, and creating and managing an accountability system — is described in detail.

Promoting professional development, for instance, includes implementing “regular inquiry and assessments about the effectiveness of instructional strategies. . . . Such inquiry may be associated with state-level reviews . . . but should not be limited to such required processes.” The description explains that school leaders should help faculty engage “in a process of continuous monitoring.” This process “allows for adjustments in the instructional program aimed at eliminating the achievement gaps between subgroups of students.”

WestEd’s Descriptions of Practice can be used as the basis for professional development workshops, as well as for the credentialing and assessment of principals by districts. The ultimate goal, Kearney says, is to provide a tool for cultivating better school leaders. **W**

For more information, contact Kearney at 510.302.4233 or kkearne@WestEd.org.

To order *Moving Leadership Standards Into Everyday Work: Descriptions of Practice*, see page 10 of this newsletter and the product order insert.

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from Education Development Center, Inc., who describe teacher leadership as “a critical feature in a coherent and focused set of district policies to address the substantive challenges of reform.”

To address reform challenges, teacher leaders not only lead professional development activities for colleagues, but they also provide both in-classroom support directly to individual teachers and indirect support by serving on committees, working in community-based partnerships, acting as a community liaison, or representing the district or school in wider networks.

HELPING PARTICIPANTS DEEPEN THEIR SUBJECT AREA KNOWLEDGE MAY BE PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT WHEN TEACHER LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS WORK WITH ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL MATH AND SCIENCE TEACHERS.

Teacher leaders are uniquely positioned to be effective in these various roles through their direct knowledge of the curriculum, the classroom, and community needs. But, WestEd’s Carroll cautions, “a good math teacher is not necessarily a good math teacher leader.” Schools and districts must carefully select teacher leader candidates who possess or can develop the following qualities, and teacher leadership programs must be focused on helping them to do so:

Deep subject area knowledge and willingness to learn further. Helping participants deepen their subject area knowledge may be particularly important when teacher leader-

ship programs work with elementary and middle school math and science teachers. “These teachers may not have had content-specific coursework,” says Carroll, “and may not feel competent or confident themselves in the subject.” The more that teacher leaders know about the subject, the better able they are to help other teachers improve their instruction.

Openness to new ways of teaching and learning. Good teacher leaders, whether working with peers or with students, recognize that there are always new approaches to teaching and learning. Teachers who participate in leadership development should be willing to explore new instructional practices. And they need to learn how to encourage this interest in other teachers. Sometimes exposure to another form of teaching is necessary to spark a teacher’s interest in change, as illustrated by an anecdote from Lois Clippinger, a teacher leader with WestEd’s Mathematics Renaissance.

Clippinger recalls working with a classroom of “low-track” fourth graders on an algebraic thinking activity that she had learned in the leadership program. The students’ regular teachers had low expectations for the students, but after observing Clippinger in their classroom for an hour, the teachers “said they couldn’t believe that these students could stay on task so well, answer so many questions, understand what was going on, and do the tasks I had posed.” As a result, the teachers modified their own mathematics instruction to better match the approach Clippinger had demonstrated.

Confidence in interacting with peers and the public. Teacher leaders must be comfortable assuming a leadership role and doing so in a variety of environments. Frequently, for example, teacher leaders will be asked to explain curricular decisions — such as textbook selections — to parents or other concerned groups. Sometimes they must resolve disagreements among their peers about the direction their program is taking, which can be difficult in a field that is widely regarded as egalitarian. Developing advocacy and communication skills is thus an important part of teacher leadership programs.

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BECOMING A DISTRICT'S "CHIEF LEARNER"

As superintendent of Montebello Unified School District, 10 miles east of downtown Los Angeles, Maggie Carrillo Mejia knows how difficult it can be to keep her eye on the ball. "We're a large urban district with many challenges," Mejia says. "It is so easy to get distracted by the chaos that can emerge at any given moment."

As such, Mejia values the guidance of West-Ed's Executive Leadership Center (ELC) for California superintendents. ELC runs a seminar series that helps superintendents learn from both current research and the best practices of their peers.

Superintendents, Mejia believes, are first and foremost "change agents" who set the tone for all other administrators, teachers, and students in their district. They have an obligation to be their districts' "chief learners," not simply managers reacting to events or circumstances. "The education enterprise is about learning," she says, "so I can't just sit on my hands and not continue to learn — I have to model it."

Research-based information

Superintendents attend countless meetings to keep their districts running smoothly, but their deputies and other administrators typically are the ones who attend professional development sessions on the latest research. However, to make education leadership decisions, superintendents themselves need to stay abreast of current issues in teaching and learning. They need to know what the research says, for example, about how to teach reading, implementing standards-based reform, and new developments in assessment.

The ELC gives superintendents the information — and inspiration — they need to improve their districts, according to ELC

Professional Development for Superintendents



administrator Laraine Roberts. In ELC sessions, superintendents focus on their role as education leaders and learn how best to allocate resources and create policies that are consistent with the most current knowledge about teaching, learning, and leadership. For example, superintendents learn how to lead a standards-driven education system and how to promote a districtwide culture of high performance and continuous improvement.

One of the most important areas of research and literature for district leaders to learn about, according to Roberts, is the "symbolic role" of the superintendent. That is, a superintendent's behavior is watched carefully and interpreted by nearly everyone in a district. Superintendents convey messages not only through what they say and write, but also nonverbally. The location he or she chooses for holding a meeting, for example, the topics on the agenda, the time allotted to each, which people are asked to participate — all of these choices suggest what the superintendent's priorities are, and thus the priorities of the district.

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SYSTEMWIDE LEADERSHIP WITH Instruction at the Core

Many well-tested models exist for developing individual instructional leaders. Much less is known about building an entire school district's capacity to improve instruction.

Currently, WestEd's Western Assessment Collaborative (WAC) staff work with several districts to address this need. Over many years, WAC has designed and conducted professional development programs to help educators, from classroom teachers to district-level administrators, ensure that *all* students reach high standards.

A recent project, Instruction at the Core (ITC), combines WAC's expertise at different levels of the education system to focus on strengthening instructional leadership districtwide. Funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Walter S. Johnson Foundation, ITC creates "a totally different learning atmosphere than almost anything else we've ever done," says WAC Director Kate Jamentz.

ITC strengthens the knowledge and skills of principals, district office leaders, and classroom teachers, while at the same time helping the district as a whole develop the infrastructure necessary to support effective standards-based instruction. That is, individuals learn and practice instructional leadership skills and at the same time address the implications of that learning on district policies and practices that influence student achievement.

Everyone at the table

Involving leaders at all levels of the district is key to ensuring a coherent system focused on instructional improvement and the ability of that system to nurture its own instructional leaders. When a district works with ITC, it commits to the participation of the superintendent, *all* district administrators responsible for supporting instruction, and *all* principals. In addition, these leaders work with classroom teachers to strengthen instruction.

For more information,
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One benefit of comprehensive participation is the immediate opportunity to apply what is learned to the district's own work. "When you're dealing with everybody related to instruction in the district, then your presentation has to do with *their* policies, *their* evaluation system, and how to improve *it*," notes Cheryl Milner, a WestEd Senior Program Associate with ITC.

Not only does professional development become customized in this way, but it begins to influence issues that arise outside formal professional development sessions. "The next time they have a principals' meeting," says Milner, "and they have an issue come up, everything they've been learning together influences their decision-making because they've all had this common learning experience."

Leader as teacher

Systemwide instructional improvement depends not only on a coherent infrastructure and the skills of individuals, but on the capacity of the district to nurture continuous learning. "One of the key theories of action here," says Jamentz, "is that leadership is about teaching. Leaders teach."

As ITC district and school leaders are introduced to new concepts and skills, they use their day-to-day work to practice modeling or facilitating the development of those skills. "We teach principals to teach standards-based instruction through everything they do," Jamentz notes. "You run your faculty meeting and have an opportunity to model good instruction. You meet with a teacher in a supervisory conference and have an opportunity to teach about


instruction. You give feedback after visiting a classroom, and you're teaching about instruction."

Exit strategy

WAC's work with classroom teachers emphasizes the need to plan backwards from what teachers want students to know and be able to do at the end of a unit of instruction. Similarly, ITC's work with districts is mapped backwards from a vision of systemwide capacity.

"As an external support-provider, we have to have an exit strategy," says Jamentz. "We need to think about what infrastructure elements, capacities, and cultural norms need to be in place in the system to sustain continuous improvement. Then we need to make sure our work directly addresses these. The goal is to make our external support services obsolete."

The theory behind ITC suggests that as learning about instructional practice becomes an integral part of the work of all adults in the district, student performance will improve. With the project in its third year, student achievement data from participating districts are encouraging — most notably, a decrease in the percentage of students scoring in the lowest quartile on state tests. In addition, the districts are evolving cultures that foster leadership development from within.

A veteran principal from an ITC school that has demonstrated significant gains in student performance over three years says: "I used to have to go outside the district to learn about ways to make improvements at my school. And I went anywhere and everywhere I could go. When I think about the importance of our work with ITC, I think of it in terms of how that has changed. Now *this district* is a place where I can learn and grow. We're working together in ways that we never have before." 

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Elements of effective programs for developing teacher leaders

WestEd's work in the Instructional Leadership Initiative (ILI) and Mathematics Renaissance has yielded lessons on how best to develop teacher leadership:

Customization. Both WestEd projects go beyond providing general principles or strategies for their participants. They help teacher leaders shape the general ideas to fit their specific local contexts. In Mathematics Renaissance, for example, teachers view video clips of a professional development session, analyze the design and facilitation of the session, distill key lessons, then apply those lessons to their own settings. "Traditionally, math professional development is 'make it and take it,'" says Carroll, meaning that teachers leave sessions with specific classroom activities in hand but little else to guide their work. "The facilitation aspect of our program encourages them to think about how a plan would actually be enacted."

Data-driven. In ILI, teacher leaders use student work to inform the development of curricular units. Mary Young, a high school math department chair and ILI participant, observes, "The process of looking carefully at student work separates ILI from other professional development. It requires you to follow up and *do* something with it." In addition, participants are provided substantive written and verbal feedback from ILI staff that measures their work against known criteria. "Teachers are not used to getting feedback and learning from it," observes Schoneman, "and it is a powerful tool."

Networking. Teachers have long been frustrated by the isolation of their profession, and good instructional programs too often remain isolated in individual classrooms. Effective teacher leadership programs build networking skills and provide a structure that supports communication across schools and districts. In ILI, for example, partici-


pating teacher teams meet with teams from other ILI schools to review one another's assessments, units, and student work, and to provide feedback. Once focused exclusively on middle grades, Mathematics Renaissance was restructured to incorporate "vertical slice networks" composed of a high school and its feeder elementary and middle schools, thus creating a coherent, districtwide leadership program.

Administrator support. A challenge faced by both WestEd projects has been attracting and sustaining the interest of administrators. "Administrative support needs to be there for ILI to work," says Schoneman.

DEVELOPING ADVOCACY AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS.

According to Carroll, this support needs to go beyond occasional participation in workshops. "Administrators must be part of the mathematics vision for the school," she says. "They must be spokespersons. They must know how to evaluate the quality of mathematics education going on in their classrooms. They must encourage teachers to engage in professional development, and they must make time for it to happen."

Final Thoughts

It is said that leaders are born, not made, but many educators beg to differ. As WestEd's ILI and Mathematics Renaissance projects have experienced, developing the capacity of teacher leaders is both difficult and complex, but certainly possible and vitally important. In the words of a principal working with ILI: "The only way you change the culture of a school, of course, is by changing teachers' practices. . . . I don't think we're ever going to change what happens in classrooms until we create the environment where teachers have the kind of opportunity they have through this project." 

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Networking opportunities

As top administrator, a superintendent has no immediate peers in his or her district. Thus, networking across districts often provides the best opportunities to improve superintendents' skills and knowledge. The ELC provides networking opportunities in its seminars, which Roberts describes as "very interactive and engaging."

Recently, for example, participants used storytelling as a leadership tool by writing their own stories, then sharing and critiquing them. Susan Rainey, superintendent of Riverside Unified School District, has always found ELC seminars stimulating and informative. She was skeptical, however, about the storytelling session. "I thought it might be a little too touchy-feely," she explains. However, Rainey says she learned the value of using stories to engage an audience — such as a school board, or a group of parents — and drive a point home. "I had always thought of storytelling more as something you use to break the ice, rather than as something you craft for a specific purpose."

Powerful learning

Together, research-based information and networking opportunities help superintendents become effective leaders. Mejia calls the seminars "powerful learning opportunities" that keep her up-to-date on both research and the latest ideas from col-

Networking across districts often provides the best opportunities to improve superintendents' skills and knowledge.

leagues statewide. "They give us the chance to be reflective and to learn together about good, research-based practices and what those might look like in our own organizations," says Mejia, whose district has shown steady academic improvement over the past four years. "I directly relate that to the knowledge and skills I've acquired through the ELC seminars, which I pass on to my principals."

In California, the seminars have been designed and implemented in collaboration with the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) and regional School Leadership Centers. WestEd is exploring opportunities to continue and expand support to superintendents within and beyond California. 

For more information, contact Roberts at 510.302.4251 or lrobert@WestEd.org.



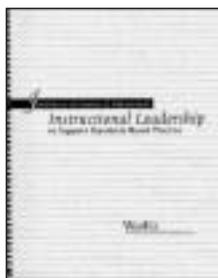
Improving Districts: Systems That Support Learning

WestEd, 2002

Commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education, this report shares lessons from school districts that have shown improvement — not only in a few schools but throughout the whole district. The report highlights the successful practices of nine districts honored by the department's National Awards Program for Model Professional Development. Topics include how these districts conceptualize and structure teacher professional development, the role of vision and communication in moving a whole district into continuous improvement, staff roles and structures, and how data-driven decision-making helps these districts initiate their change efforts and keep them on track.

64 pages / Price: \$9.95 /
Order #: ID-02-01

For ordering information,
please refer to the
product order insert.



Isolation is the Enemy of Improvement: Instructional Leadership to Support Standards-Based Practice

Kate Jamentz, WestEd, 2002

Developed by WestEd's Western Assessment Collaborative, this book is designed to help principals and teacher leaders understand the demands of standards-based instruction and foster the conditions that support it. The book articulates the specific teaching skills needed for standards-based instruction and presents two annotated classroom vignettes illustrating these skills. It also describes the learning opportunities teachers need for acquiring or refining these skills and explains how instructional leaders can facilitate such opportunities.

138 pages / Price: \$20 / Order #: WAC-02-01

WestEd Resources

ON SITE AND DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

Many WestEd resources address issues related to leadership. A few are summarized here. For additional related products, please refer to the *WestEd Resource Catalog 2002* (see p. 11 of this newsletter for more information).

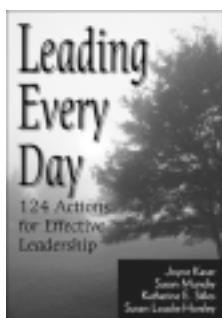


Moving Leadership Standards Into Everyday Work: Descriptions of Practice

WestEd, 2003

What does it take to be an effective school leader? In recent years, a number of organizations and states have sought to answer this question by developing or adopting standards that articulate a growing consensus about the knowledge, skills, and dispositions requisite to successful school leadership. This publication extends that effort by further defining the expectations behind specific administrator standards and identifying some of the key behaviors required of administrators if their efforts are to yield student results. It illustrates these behaviors across a continuum of practice as novice principals and other administrators grow from competent managers into effective leaders.

64 pages / Price: \$15 / Order #: LA-03-01



Leading Every Day: 124 Actions for Effective Leadership

Joyce Kaser, Susan Mundry, Katherine E. Stiles, & Susan Loucks-Horsley, Corwin Press, 2001

Leadership is a matter of personal insight and inspiration as much as practical, day-to-day accomplishment. This "daybook" for administrators and teachers offers inspiration and opportunities for reflection in four one-month units that explore four major aspects of leadership: everyday leadership, everyday change, leading learning, and leading effective groups. Each page of the daybook presents quotations, inspiring stories, and invitations for discourse designed to help veteran and aspiring leaders alike enhance their leadership practices, every day.

286 pages / Price: \$29.95 / Order #: LI-01-02



How Best to Achieve School Success (Policy Brief)

WestEd, 2002

Despite growing consensus among cognitive, social, emotional, and neuro-physiological research regarding how children learn, little of this scientific understanding has been used to drive recent school readiness initiatives. This situation must change if these programs are to succeed. This Policy Brief explores three key factors that policymakers need to take into account in designing school readiness initiatives: recent cross-disciplinary research findings about how children learn, the reality of a preschool workforce inadequately trained and paid, and the nationwide absence of comprehensive child care and preschool systems. Finally, the brief offers policy implications.

4 pages / Price: Single copy, free / Order #: PO-02-03



Changing the Faces of Mathematics: Perspectives on Indigenous People of North America

Walter Secada (ed.), *National Council of Teachers of Mathematics*, 2002

Indigenous cultures have long-standing mathematical knowledge that may or may not be codified in the ways teachers are accustomed to. WestEd authors Elise Trumbull and Sharon Nelson-Barber and their coauthor Jean Mitchell contribute the opening chapter to this edited volume on teaching mathematics in ways that are culturally responsive. The book addresses both the theory and practice of mathematics instruction for the indigenous peoples of North America. It also addresses the cultural knowledge that mathematics teachers of indigenous students need to have and provides concrete lessons and activities that can serve as examples of culture-based mathematics instruction.

283 pages / Price: \$25.95 / Order #: NCTM-02-01

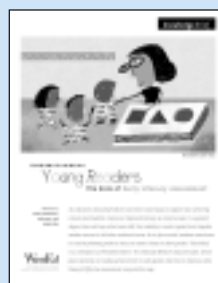


Getting the Most from Technology in Schools (Knowledge Brief)

Noel White, Cathy Ringstaff, & Loretta Kelley, *WestEd*, 2002

This Knowledge Brief, developed by WestEd's Regional Technology in Education Consortium (RTEC), addresses educators and policymakers who want to know how to make the most of their investments in computer-based technology for schools. Based on a review of recent research, the brief describes the conditions under which computer-based technology is likely to have the most impact on students. It draws lessons from this research for developing effective school or district technology plans.

12 pages / Price: \$8 / Order #: KN-02-01



Understanding Young Readers: The Role of Early Literacy Assessment (Knowledge Brief)

Stanley N. Rabinowitz, Judy Wong, & Nikola Filby, *WestEd*, 2002

Addressed to district administrators, principals, and other instructional leaders, this Knowledge Brief helps establish a foundation for more consistent and effective use of reading assessment in the early primary grades. It explains the importance and some of the uses of early assessment. The brief describes basic approaches to literacy assessment and how they align to different purposes. It also covers the challenges of assessing young children and some of the issues that must be addressed if schools are to undertake valid and reliable literacy assessment that can help teachers better support all young readers.

16 pages / Price: \$8 / Order #: KN-02-02



For ordering information, please refer to the product order insert.

WestEd Resource Catalog For a free copy, email dtorres@WestEd.org; call 415.565.3000 or toll-free, (877) 4-WestEd; or write: WestEd / 730 Harrison Street / San Francisco, CA / 94107-1242. The catalog is also available at WestEd.org/catalog.

R&D ALERT

R&D Alert covers issues affecting schools in the Western Regional Educational Laboratory's four-state region — Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah — and throughout the United States. Current and previous issues are available at WestEd.org/R&DAlert. Your letters are welcomed. Please send comments to Noel White, WestEd, 730 Harrison Street, San Francisco, CA 94107-1242; fax, 415.512.2024; or email, nwhite@WestEd.org.

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