Pennsylvania State Literacy Plan: A Visual Representation

The Pennsylvania State Literacy Plan graphic provides a visual representation of the framework for the PaSLP. The base or guiding principles represent the beliefs and assumptions underlying a strong literacy plan (see Part II: Guiding Principles) and support the essential elements or critical components that must be defined and operationalized in any comprehensive literacy program (see Part III: Essential Elements). The two pillars, Leadership and Partnerships, provide the bridge between the guiding principles and essential elements. They permeate all aspects of essential elements and are critical to the success of a comprehensive literacy program. Each of these pillars is discussed below.

Leadership In any discussion of school reform or school change, the importance of effective leadership is highlighted. Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, and Easton (2010), for example, in their framework for school reform, describe leadership as "the driver for change" (p. 62); they also identify principals as key agents in any systemic improvement. In addition to having excellent management skills, principals must be able to orchestrate "people, programs, and extant resources" (p. 63) to influence instructional practices and develop a climate in which distributed leadership is encouraged and supported. Further, effective principals are able to inspire, nudge, and build the collective capacity towards achieving common goals. As explained by Bryk et al. (2010), principals will need to develop environments in which there is shared or distributed leadership—a climate in which leadership is distributed or stretched across individuals and situations (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001).
Given the importance of supporting students' literacy and language growth; that is, their ability to read, write, and communicate, literacy leadership is an essential. In other words, educators such as school librarians, literacy coaches, reading specialists, teacher leaders, as well as classroom teachers, have a major responsibility to work collaboratively and to serve as leaders in facilitating instructional change and student literacy achievement. In a recent study of schools in PA designed to investigate how Response to Intervention (RtI) had affected the role of specialized personnel and what skill sets they needed to effect change (Bean & Lillenstein, 2010), several key findings emerged. First, the principal had a key role in establishing a positive school climate and norms for collaboration. Second, a literacy leadership team that included the principal, literacy professionals (coaches, reading specialists, librarians), classroom teachers, and others such as a psychologist and special educators worked collaboratively to analyze data, student learning, and various strategies for modifying instruction. Educators in these schools had to learn to work collaboratively, to share ideas about instructional practices, to discuss openly what was working and what was not as effectively in meeting student needs. As summarized by Bean (2014), literacy leaders can be those with a formal leadership position (literacy coach) or they can function informally (teacher leaders who provide support and resources for their peers). To be effective, they must, in addition to their knowledge of literacy instruction and assessment, understand adult learning, how to lead adult learning, and how to

"set into motion the leadership of others" (p. 17). They must be able to work collaboratively with others to set common goals and a shared vision—a vision that addresses the needs of students as 21st century learners.

Partnerships Robust evidence indicates a strong relationship between active family involvement and students' success in school, including their academic performance, motivation and engagement, rates of graduation and higher grade-point averages at the secondary school level (Paratore, Steiner, & Dougherty, 2014). In Bryk et al.'s (2010) framework for school improvement, the importance of school-community partnerships is highlighted as a key factor in a comprehensive school improvement initiative. By developing partnerships with families/caregivers and with community agencies, schools have a greater possibility of keeping students engaged and active in school. Epstein et al., (2009), describes six categories of partnerships, including:

- Parenting: Helping parents create positive home environments for learning;
- Communicating with parents: Designing and implementing processes, including technology, for home and school communication;
- Volunteers: Seeking opportunities for volunteers, including senior citizens, family members, university students;
- Learning at home: Helping families or caregivers understand how to support student learning at home;
- Decision Making: Involving families or caregivers in the decisions made in schools (e.g., scheduling); and
- Community Collaboration: Establishing partnerships with community organizations and agencies and providing services for the community.

Districts then have a responsibility to develop well-articulated, systematic programs that create opportunities for families/caregivers to be involved with their children's education, from early years of schooling through high school. They should also seek to develop relationships with community agencies in their locale, including preschool providers, local libraries, universities, as well as various social agencies that might be interested in partnering in various activities.