

## Implementing a Comprehensive Accountability Framework

The following education leaders have established Comprehensive Accountability Frameworks in their districts. I invited them to share their thoughts about their frameworks for a chapter that I was writing titled, “A Framework to Support Successful Leadership.”

### **John Hunter, Associate Superintendent, Valley Central School District**

*I've been thinking about the thesis for your chapter and do have some thoughts to share. Please feel free to use them or not. You may find that many of these statements are repetitive and certainly not new ideas but they fit. I've listed six thoughts but could go on.*

- *I have seen the power of the Comprehensive Accountability framework restore a school's focus and confidence. A school that felt it was leaderless and beset by problems they never felt they could overcome has now regained its sense of direction. They now see the light at the end of the tunnel.*
- *One of the most persistent complaints that I've heard in my thirty-eight years as an educator has been that the leadership team, whether at the school or district level, isn't listening to what the classroom teachers are saying they need to improve instruction and student performance. The Comprehensive Accountability Plan that we've put in place is eliminating this criticism. The strength of the framework is that it gives everyone in the school district a voice and forum.*
- *Just about everything you read about leadership speaks to having a clear vision or expectations for your organization or school. Mission statements have been written for years but are useless unless action is taken to implement whatever the mission is. The Comprehensive Accountability Plan provides a framework that enables teachers, administrators, and Board of Education members to identify their goals and establish specific action plans to make them happen.*
- *The establishment of data teams tied to a structure that enables them to develop specific plans to improve instruction works. Data analysis, by itself, will not improve student outcomes unless action is taken upon what was learned. The Comprehensive Accountability Plan, once again, provides that structure.*
- *Everybody in the school system wants to know “the plan” Teachers want to know that the principal has a plan. Principals want to know that the Central Office administrators have a plan. The Central Office staff wants to know that the Board of Education has a plan. Without a clearly articulated plan, there is little leadership. The Comprehensive Accountability Plan provides the “security” of “the plan”. And better yet, all involved helped create the plan at various levels.*
- *The ongoing evaluation and review of the established goals is critical to meeting the goals and action plans established by individual schools, departments, and divisions.*

*The quarterly review process keeps the plan alive. Once again, this is part of the framework.*

**Olwen Herron, Former Chief Academic Officer, Division of Academic & Instructional Services, Fort Bend Independent School District**

*An accountability system provides a framework for collecting and analyzing data at all levels of the organization in order to make sound instructional decisions. With the systemic perspective created in the framework, all continuous improvement processes become aligned and implemented to high levels due to continuous monitoring of results and the connection between results and practices. The framework becomes a structure for holding it all together as we seek to continuously improve!*

**John VanPelt, Superintendent, Lake Villa School District**

*Most planning processes are so comprehensive that teaching, learning, and the essential challenges surrounding instruction simply get lost or have to compete for time, attention, and resources with other challenges that don't impact achievement. In my experience, this is the norm in most districts. The Comprehensive AP aligns planning, implementation, and reporting into a single process where teaching and learning remain the focus. This makes sense to staff. It is our mission. If we don't get this done the rest doesn't matter. Leadership is about keeping the focus on classrooms, developing and supporting your staff, and increasing learning and achievement. The AP helps get this accomplished.*

**Hope Stuart, Principal of Barea Elementary School, Montgomery, NY**

*A Comprehensive Accountability (Learning) Framework design supports school wide leadership that is shared, instructionally focused, and learning centered based on the ownership that is woven throughout. When school stakeholders share a common vision in a collaborative setting, they become empowered to design strategic goals that target current building needs. Assessment techniques are woven into this process to provide data that affords timely feedback regarding their instructional endeavors. The data driven feedback spurs discussion among colleagues regarding successful and ineffective teaching.*

*Now that our teachers at Berea Elementary School are using deliberate data, they are able to monitor learning on a daily basis in order to make necessary adjustments and plan for future instruction in a timely manner. Our deliberate data endeavors have minimized the length of time it takes to obtain data and have maximized our teachers' ability to analyze learning and adjust instruction. The essence of a Comprehensive Accountability Framework inspires all stakeholders to become instructional leaders. This inspiration fosters a self-sustaining focus on academic excellence that nurtures life-*

*long learning in our teachers, which ensures all our students reap the rewards of this cyclical process.*

**Murry Schekman, Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Education,  
Pajaro Valley Unified School District**

*A Comprehensive Accountability (Learning) Framework supports systemwide leadership that is shared, instructionally focused, and learning centered.*

*Leadership is all about a simple outcome – taking a group of people from Point A to Point B. Some leaders appear to have an excellent vision but cannot communicate the vision and there is not then a critical mass of movement. The good news about our bad economy and slumping schools in our country is that we've had to become laser like in our focus. Our focus, as educational leaders, has to be precise. We are spending a great deal of our conversations with each other and the public on student learning, less on winning basketball games, as one simple example. A Comprehensive Accountability Framework has School Site Councils reviewing data, faculty meetings reviewing data and sharing best instructional practices and our support staff fully understanding their role with regard to student learning, including the secretaries and custodial staff, as another example. It is all about leadership to be able to take so many stakeholders to that place where student learning is dissected and then followed up with resources and effective instruction for it really is just about student learning.*

**Dr. Sandi Kitts, Former Superintendent of Learning, Prairie South School  
Division, Saskatchewan**

*"The Comprehensive Learning Framework (CLF) was developed with input from teachers, administrators, board members, and parents. It is the roadmap that aligns decisions, expenditures, and actions throughout the school district. It is a living document and process that develops each year. We think of it as the GPS system that guides all the work in the school district from student learning and accountability, to professional learning and practice, to board governance. The power of the learning framework is the involvement and continuous learning of a broad range of participants. The CLF builds a process to define and organize the important work done throughout a school district."*