

RIASP Position Statement 3/3/2010

Principals are among the first to concur that schools must change. The Rhode Island Association of School Principals (RIASP) supports the U.S. Department of Education's commitment to turning around the nation's schools. However, RIASP has advocated, along with its national affiliate organizations, that firing the principal as one of the first steps in reforming the school is a mistake.

Simply firing the principal and hiring a new one may seem like a bold, courageous move to some, but we suggest that this practice is short sighted and without merit in the work that needs to be done to reform our educational system. Though it might be true that the principals in some of the lowest performing schools in the nation may be ineffective, RIASP advocates for multiple measures of performance to assess principals' effectiveness just as RI requires multiple measures of student performance. RIASP also believes that if given the flexibility and support necessary to implement reform, many principals would succeed in reforming schools.

Along with the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), RIASP asserts that when using student indicators to measure principals' performance multiple indicators should be evaluated along with state assessments.

Watching the events unfold in Central Falls over the past few weeks, the five hundred members of the Rhode Island Association of School Principals are seriously concerned. Termination of the faculty and administration has resulted in the non-renewal of all four Central Falls High School administrators. Below are some of RIASP's concerns.

- Is it fair to believe that a newly appointed administrative team should shoulder the blame for a school that was taken over by the State of Rhode Island long before the current administrators were in the school? The length of service in the building by the current administrators of Central Falls High School ranges from six months to two years.
- Even given that short length of service, data reveals that under the current administrators, changes have been made that given time will result in improved student achievement. Is it fair to expect that in just six months a principal new to the school can significantly impact student performance on the October NECAP?
- The current administrators of Central Falls High School are very willing to lead change at the school. In fact, they were selected for their current roles precisely because they have the capacity to bring about change. Should the individuals recently identified as being capable of "turning around" the high school be terminated before they have had a reasonable period of time to change the culture in the school?

RIASP supports the current administrators of Central Falls High School and believes a school improvement plan can be implemented successfully with these instructional leaders. It takes years to change the culture in a school. We believe the current high school administrative team should be given the opportunity to collaborate with all of the constituents in the Central Falls community to ensure that all students are provided the education they need and deserve. Principals should be afforded the opportunity to be part of the reform effort and given the opportunity to lead change.

Executive Board, Rhode Island Association of School Principals