



Leaders and Partners Working Together for Success

MASA Fall Leadership, 2021

Pierz Public Schools with Sourcewell Technology

Welcome!



George Weber

Superintendent, Pierz Public Schools

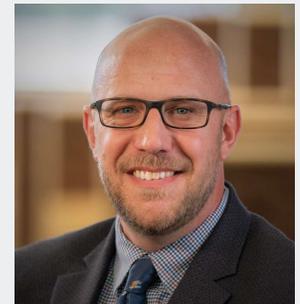


Delonna Darsow, PhD

Data Product Champion

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VP Business Development



Agenda

Discover how leadership support can be customized to fit your own district needs through:

- Research and Data
- Thought Leadership
- Considerations for partnerships
- Pierz Public Schools' experience

“In most cases, rural schools simply do not benefit from the same variety of philanthropic safety nets common in many urban areas.”

Henry, 2019



What problems do small – medium districts face?

Similar problems to bigger districts, but limited resources

- Smaller staff
- Lower tax base for generating revenue

Geographic location

- May be remote
- Competition for technical staff from industry
- Multiple roles held by few individuals
- Fewer professional learning opportunities

What advantages do smaller districts have?

- Sphere of influence is BIGGER
 - Superintendent is the face of district
 - Community, school board, and superintendent in a much smaller circle
- Capacity for transformation is much GREATER
 - Distance between student achievement and impact of leadership is smaller

What the research says

- Extensive research exists that links leadership to improved student achievement and well-being
- Only a limited number of research studies denote settings
- Why does this matter?
 - Leadership contexts require differentiation
 - Rural students constitute nearly 25% of student population
 - Rural schools constitute nearly 33% of schools across the U.S.

Day, et al., 2011; Dinman, 2008; Heck & Halliger, 2011; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Louis, Dretzke, & Wahlstrom, 2010; Moffitt, 2007; Robinson, 2011; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012.



What makes rural leaders successful?

People-centered leadership— **COLLABORATION**

- Among and with staff
- With individuals
- With parents and students
- With community members
- Through social capital
 - Networking
 - Business associations
 - Professional organizations
 - Higher education institutions

Preston, Barnes (2017). Successful Leadership in Rural Schools: Cultivating Collaboration. *The Rural Educator*, 38 (1), pp. 6-15.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1225156.pdf>



Thought leadership continuum



Introducing Pierz Public Schools



- Evolution of technology in Pierz
- Corey could dialogue with staff who had differing agendas
- Individuals' purpose was misaligned with district purpose
- District needs became broader than individual's current duties/skill set
- Corey's partnership allowed key conversations to occur, and develop processes to move beyond the situation

How was the partnership formed?

- George and Corey met at Minnesota Rural Education Association (MREA) Conference in 2019
- George contacted Sourcewell Technology for assistance with an instructional technology needs assessment for his district
- In August 2020, George had an opportunity to change Pierz Public Schools instructional and operational technology team – and requested Sourcewell Technology's help with that process

As a result of the partnership...



Pierz benefited in many ways:

- This process led to the best decision.
- SWT helped guide difficult conversations with multiple players
- Partnership with consultant forced conversations that needed to happen

As a result of the partnership...



What did we learn?

- Bringing in consultant gave a broader perspective
- Depth of conversation was daunting to consider – communication, process definition, and emotions with change
- Consulting provided a solid process that was worth the time invested

What are the next steps?

- Work the plan and follow through
- Identify next steps with SWT



Future opportunities

- All of the staff involved with challenge conversations developed great respect for Corey and Sourcewell Technology for the contributions made
- Pierz has only scratched the surface as to what the potential can be
- There are more opportunities for partnership around leadership support

“Not only are school and district leaders charged with making important decisions about allocating the resources available to their context, but they must also seek new resource streams and opportunities that will lead to resource-rich partnerships.”

Henry, 2019



Thought leadership continuum



Partnership resource considerations

Colleagues and/or nearby districts

- Building relationships
- Shared expertise and growth opportunities
- Local
- No cost
- Problem solving strategies/skills may be more limited
- Experience base may be more limited
- “Co-opetition”
- Availability of expertise

Partnership resource considerations

Regions or area collaboratives

- Building relationships
- Similar expertise and growth opportunities
- Regional - geographically close
- Enhanced problem-solving strategies
- Experience base may be more limited
- Availability of expertise
- Low/limited/shared cost

Regional and Service Cooperative Resources



* Consulting options: Business and Finance, Data Strategy Leadership, Leadership and Strategic Planning, Technology Leadership

** Operational software: Student Information System, Enterprise Resource Program

*** Adult Basic Education, CTE, Deaf/Visually Impaired, ECFE, Special Education, and others

Partnership resource considerations

National Example: Consortium for School Networking (CoSN)

- International expertise
- Relationships with school districts nationwide
- Connections with corporate partners
- Professional learning through conference, webinars, and online courses
- Frameworks for common issues of interest - Trusted Environments, Essential Skills,
- Low cost (membership based on district size)
- Certification (Certified Education Technology Leader - CETL)



Partnership resource considerations

Private consultant considerations

- Matched to your exact needs
- Broad field of expertise
- National, state, or regional
- Comprehensive problem-solving strategies
- Significant experience base
- Availability of expertise
- Higher cost

Key take-aways

- School leaders in rural settings are most successful with a high level of collaboration
- School leaders for small to medium districts can access partnerships to greatly enhance resources
- School districts can access more expertise by expanding partnerships
- Partnership as exemplified with Pierz Public Schools allowed the district to retool and have a greater positive impact on student learning
- Partner organizations exist and are eager to work with school districts

What questions do you have for us?



Thank you and contact information



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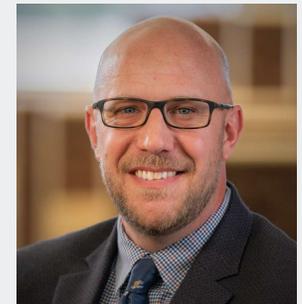


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Resources

Farmer (2009). Unique rural district politics. *The Rural Educator*, 30 (2), pp. 29-32.

Henry (2019). Identifying and Allocating Resources for Learning Improvement: A study of Sustainably Improving Rural Schools. *Theory and Practice in Rural Education*, 9 (1), pp. 61-73.

Preston, Barnes (2018). Successful Leadership in Rural Schools: Cultivating Collaboration. *The Rural Educator*, 38 (1), pp. 6-15. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1225156.pdf>

Wargo, Budge, Carr-Chellman, & Canfield-Davis (2021). Leadership for rural school district improvement: The case of one statewide research practice partnership. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 37 (1), pp. 1-18. <https://10.2609/jrre3701>



Professional Associations

Minnesota Professional Associations

- Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA)
- Minnesota Association of School Business Officials (MASBO)
- Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA)
- Minnesota Rural Education Association (MREA)
- Principals' Associations
- Others