



FACT SHEET: SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION MANAGER (SAM) PROJECT

Research makes it clear that effective leadership is critical to improving student achievement. In an era of limited resources and increasing pressure to turn around low-performing schools, promoting more effective school leadership is the best way to help students and schools meet higher expectations. Principals make this happen by helping change schools into professional learning communities that focus on improving teaching and learning.

Principals, however, continue to see their roles and responsibilities expand. It was once enough for principals to be good building managers. Today, they are held accountable for improving student achievement. Even though principals want to be more involved in leading instructional improvement, data show that principals can spend up to 75 percent of their time on management duties. With support to share non-instructional tasks, principals can change this equation and spend dramatically more time on practices that lead to improved student learning, including:

- **Setting directions**, including a vision, goals and high expectations;
- **Becoming a leader of leaders** by working with other key staff members to distribute various leadership roles;
- **Developing teachers and other staff members** by providing instructional leadership and quality professional development and building strong professional learning communities; and
- **Redesigning and transforming the school** by building a culture that is focused on teaching and learning to achieve goals.

SAM: A PROCESS TO GIVE PRINCIPALS THE TIME THEY NEED TO IMPROVE INSTRUCTION AND INCREASE LEARNING

The national School Administration Manager (SAM) Project brings together tools, training and strategies to help principals focus more time on instructional leadership. The project's goal is to direct a greater percentage of the principal's time to teaching practice, student learning and school improvement, rather than management responsibilities. It is an efficient and cost-effective way to give principals tools and strategies to focus more time on instructional leadership.

Funded by The Wallace Foundation, the SAM Project has been in development for several years as a pilot in districts nationwide. It began in Louisville, KY, in 2002 as the Alternative School Administration Study. The study looked at conditions that prevented principals from making instructional leadership a priority and developed strategies to help change those conditions.

Preliminary results in three Louisville schools are promising. Three years after participating in the SAM Project, principals spent more than 70 percent of their time on instructional issues and student achievement increased.

Today, educators in nine Wallace partner states are developing and implementing the SAM Project, including California, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Missouri, New York and Texas. Their efforts are being reviewed by a team of researchers. The results, expected in mid-2009, will help inform next steps for the work.

THE NATIONAL SAM PROJECT IS A STATEWIDE/DISTRICTWIDE CHANGE STRATEGY

The SAM Project goes beyond simply helping individual principals improve instruction in their schools. It aims to ensure that the entire community is aware that understanding and changing principal time use is critical to transforming schools. This is a complex change strategy that SAMs can help facilitate.

HOW THE SAM PROJECT WORKS

The core elements of the SAM Project are:

1) Willingness to commit to increasing time for instructional leadership. Districts and principals voluntarily participate in the SAM Project.

2) Baseline Time/Task Analysis™ Data Collection. Data collectors shadow principals for five days and record in five-minute increments how much time they spend on management, instructional or personal tasks. Principals use this data to create goals for the time they spend on instructional leadership.

3) Engagement with a SAM. The School Administration Manager or SAM may be a new staff position or an existing staff person who takes on new duties. The SAM meets with the principal daily to analyze how time is being used and to shift managerial duties to others. During meetings, they use a software calendar program, TimeTrack™, which was developed for this purpose. The goals are to help shift managerial duties to others and to increase the principal's time on leading instructional improvement.

4) External coaching. The principal and SAM also meet monthly with a Time Change Coach, a retired school administrator who is selected and trained to discuss progress and challenges and identify training needs with the principal/SAM team. The Time Change Coach also builds support networks of principals and SAMs throughout the SAM network.

5) Follow-up Time/Task Analysis Data Collection one year later to assess improvement.

THE SAM PROJECT HELPS PRINCIPALS TRANSFORM THEIR SCHOOLS

The SAM Project helps principals use data to reflect on their practice and develop a plan to reframe their roles, become more effective leaders and improve student achievement. The process gives principals tools to analyze results from school and community surveys, establish baseline data and set goals to increase time spent on instruction.

The SAM Project also encourages principals to build strong professional development communities. As part of the process, principals not only agree to engage in their own professional development using data to guide self-reflection, but also to work with staff to distribute leadership responsibilities and share decisionmaking roles. The project is an objective, low-stakes assessment that gives principals constructive feedback.

In addition, the SAM Project helps principals strengthen relationships with their school communities to help improve teaching and learning. It asks that principals voluntarily seek assistance and advice on how to be better school leaders from the teachers, staff, parents and students at their schools.

While more research is underway to understand the promise and challenges of expanding the SAM Project, preliminary community surveys note that teachers, parents and students notice and appreciate how SAMs are helping principals change their focus to improving instruction in order to raise achievement for all students.

For more information and research on the SAM Project, visit www.wallacefoundation.org/SAM. For information and research about other education leadership issues, visit The Wallace Foundation's Knowledge Center, www.wallacefoundation.org.

The SAM Project is led by Mark Shellinger, who has created two tools for which he claims trademark status: Time/Task Analysis and TimeTrack. For more information, contact Mark Shellinger at 502-777-7760; Fairbanks@insightbb.com; or www.SAMsConnect.com.