Improving School Leadership:
Systemic Action

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Our presentation

- Why systemic approaches to school leadership: theoretical background

- Systemic approaches to school leadership: The benefits and challenges

- A practical example: system leadership as national policy

- What do the experts say about theory and practice

Improving School Leadership: Systemic action

The premise: Making every school a good school for every student

- For sustainable large scale reform to happen, school leaders need to be systems thinkers in action (Michael Fullan,2005)

- Becoming a learning organisation requires leaders to develop capacity and to clarify the broader systemic interdependencies and make them more effective (Senge, 1990)

- If our goal is to make every school a great school then policy and practice have to focus on system improvement (Hopkins, 2006)

Improving School Leadership: Systemic action

Making every school a good school for every student

- Key challenge of school improvement today is for school administrators to become leaders who develop and raise high level achievement by working with, learning from and influence the behaviour of others within and beyond the schools (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006).

- Leadership as the practice of improvement: to invest in the development of this knowledge, need to invest through networks and institutional arrangments that connect people with the required knowledge and with other practitioners (Elmore, 2006)

# School Improvement : quality and performance over time
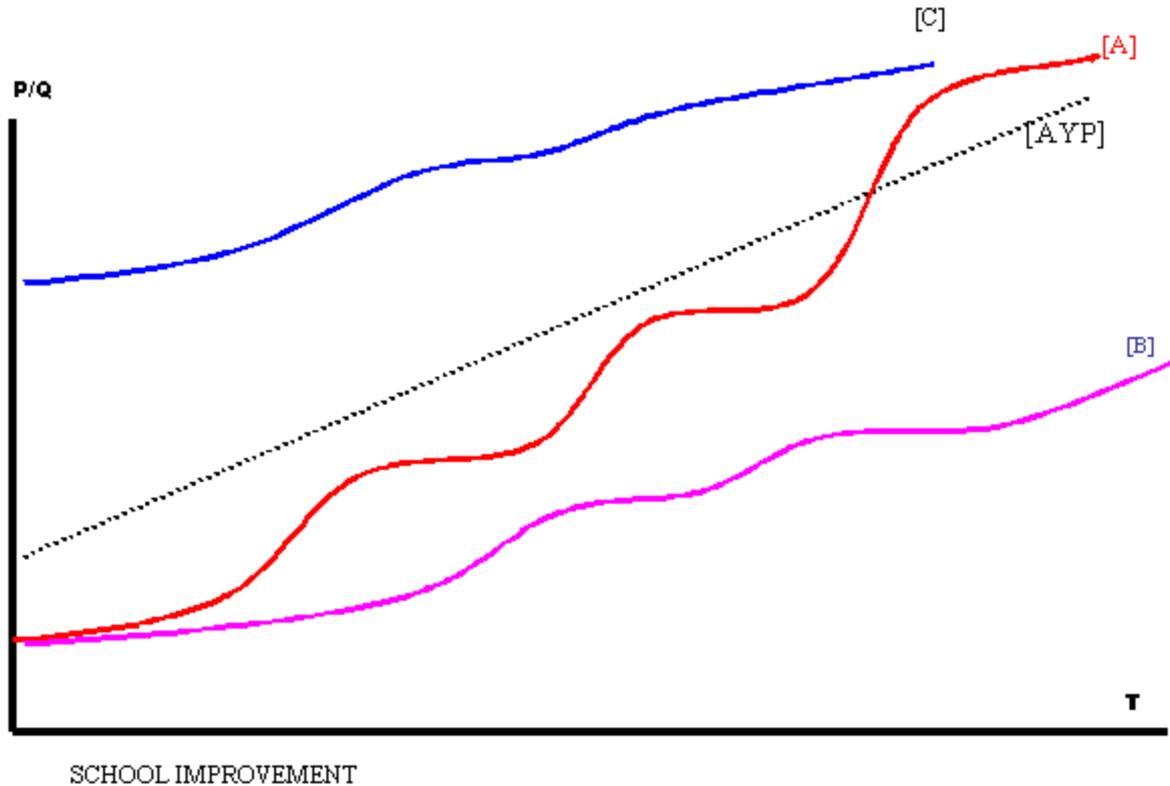
R. Elmore: Leadership development for school improvement

- Honour the principle of reciprocity

- Leadership as a human investment – not a personal attribute

- Invest in social capital on practice of improvement: focus on leadership for learning of the system

- Build the strategic function: school goals

- Learning as close as possible to work

D. Hopkins: System wide reform
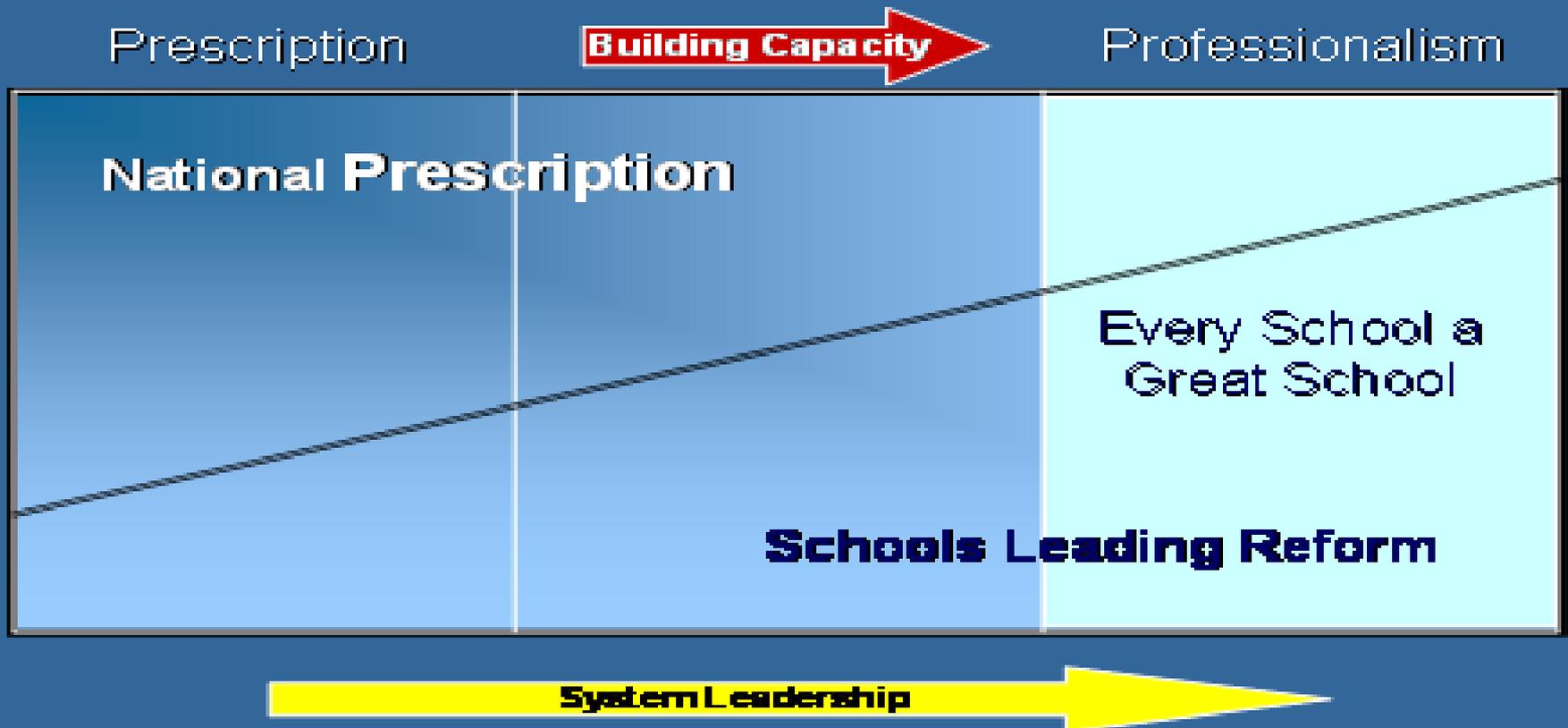
D. Hopkins: Logic of school improvement

- Learning potential of all students
- Repertoire of learning skills
- Models of learning – tools for teaching
- Embedded in curriculum context and schemes of work
- Whole school emphasis on high expectations
- and pedagogic consistency
- Sharing schemes of work and curriculum across and between schools, clusters, local authorities and nationally

Systemic action: **How are countries doing it?**

We searched for innovative country practices:

Working beyond the school borders

- England (October 06): S. Huber, H. Moorman, B. Pont
- Finland (January 07): A. Heargraves, G. Halasz, B. Pont
- Belgium (April 07): C. Day, J. Moller, D. Nusche, B. Pont

  Conference in England July 2006

Programmes to prepare and develop school for system change

- Austria (April 07): L. Stoll, S. Rahm, H. Moorman
- Victoria, Australia, (Aug 07): P. Matthews, H. Moorman, D. Nusche

  Conference in Dublin November 2007

Collaborating beyond the school borders

England
- Formal collaboration arrangements in schools (Federations)
- System leadership in LEAs, consultant leaders

Finland
- Municipalities sharing school leaders 1/3 or time
- System leadership is embodied in practice

Flanders
- Communities of schools allow for agreements in organisation of provision, pupil orientation, common staffing policy…

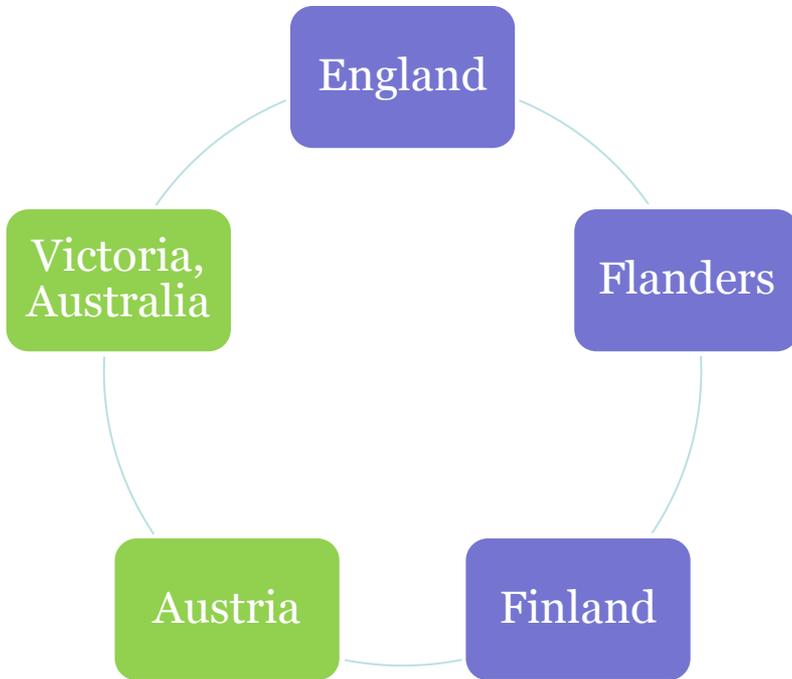# Leadership development for systems change

Austria

- Austrian Leadership Academy
- New vision of leadership through academy that provides forum for training, coaching, and networking.

Australia

- Learning to Lead Effective Schools (2006) embedded as essential in broader school improvement process.
- 19 different training programmes for different stages, with common conceptual framework, domains and descriptions of leadership.

What do they have in common?

```
        England

Victoria,           Flanders
Australia

     Austria    Finland
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Focusing on developing leadership for system wide school improvement

a) by creating cooperation possibilities.

b) Through training and development.

c) We found evidence of positive impact.

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Evidence of Benefits

Developing leadership capacity for present and future

Rationalising resources

More coherent supply of services

Distributed leadership

Improving school outcomes

Challenges to practice: Sustainability

Developing leadership capacity: professional development of systems leaders

Cooperation in an environment of choice and competition

Recognising, recruiting and supporting systems leaders

Introducing distributed leadership at the school

Brokerage: Who launches and mediates cooperation?

Making every school a good school

School leadership can make a difference in system wide sustainable reform

System leadership can contribute to system wide improvement by developing capacity and responding to leadership succession.

And now let's focus on an example of system leadership in practice...

The systemic importance of outstanding Principals

- Retain them in the system
- Give them access to high quality development opportunities
- Ensure that their schools have a reservoir of leadership capacity
- Encourage these leaders and their schools to help others to become more effective
- By recognising and supporting them as system-leading schools

# **Characteristics of Principals who become system leaders**

- They know how to improve schools

- They lead very good or excellent schools

- They are influential beyond their schools and communities

- They are committed to their students and to young people more widely

- They see the benefits of partnering and networking with other schools

- They seek new challenges

Examples in the OECD case studies

- High Performing Principals in Victoria
  - Potential system leaders
- National Leaders of Education in England
  - 125 increasing to 500
- Have evolved from consultant headteachers and other strategies
- What are the preconditions for system leaders and their schools?
- What is their impact?

Three Challenges for System-Leading Schools: 1. Achieving Excellence

- Leadership with vision, courage and conviction

- High expectations and ambitions for children

- Staff consistency

- Personalised learning

- Tracking learners' progress

- Distributing leadership

- Constantly reflecting on what they do and analysing impact

- Investing in professional growth

- Recognising everyone as a learner
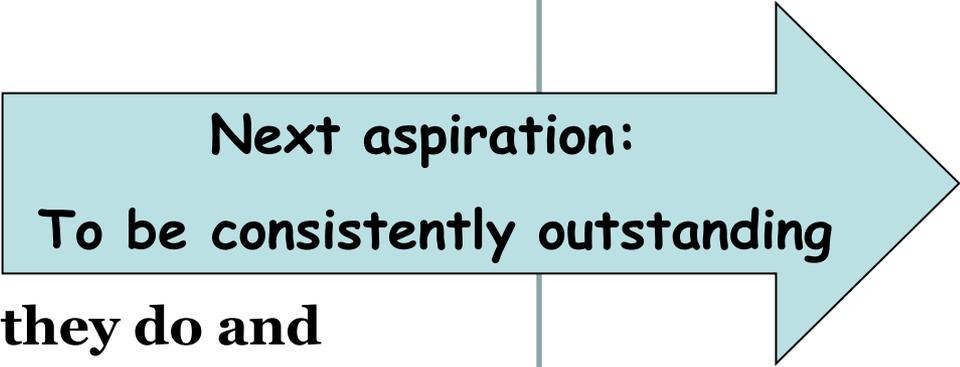
Next aspiration:

To be consistently outstanding

Three Challenges for System-Leading Schools: 2. Sustaining Excellence

•Seeking to improve further

•Raising attainment; reducing the gap

•Growing leaders

•Systematically improving teaching and learning; be a training school

•Researching and innovating

•Opening their doors to other professionals

•Systematically reducing barriers to children's learning and wellbeing

•Extending their frontiers; in the community, nationally and internationally
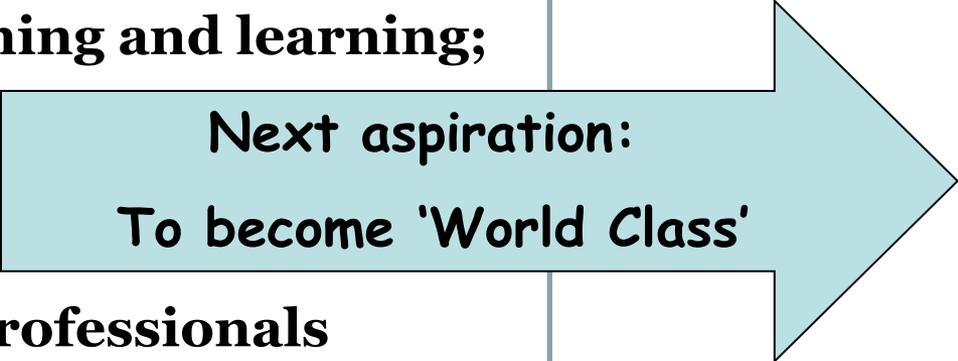
Next aspiration:

To become 'World Class'

Three Challenges for System-Leading Schools: 3. Sharing Excellence, through

- Active school partnering

- Assessing need and engaging with purpose

- Strategic clarity and setting high expectations

- Injecting commitment and expertise

- Addressing underperformance

- Modelling principles

- Earning trust

- Challenging and supporting

- Monitoring progress

- Building capacity
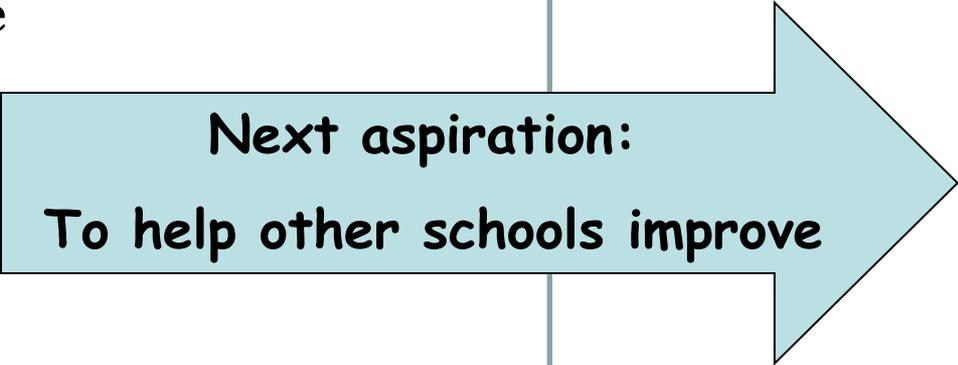
Next aspiration:

To help other schools improve

National Leaders of Education: What is their impact?

% Level 2:
a. NLE's schools

> Graphs show 3-year rolling averages.
>
> Improved achievement becomes apparent in most cases in the second year of partnership or later

b. Supported schools

c. Partnerships > 18 months

d. Partnerships < 18 months
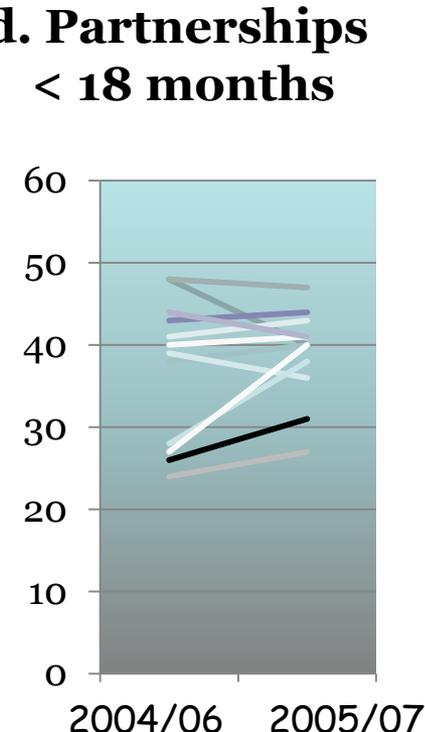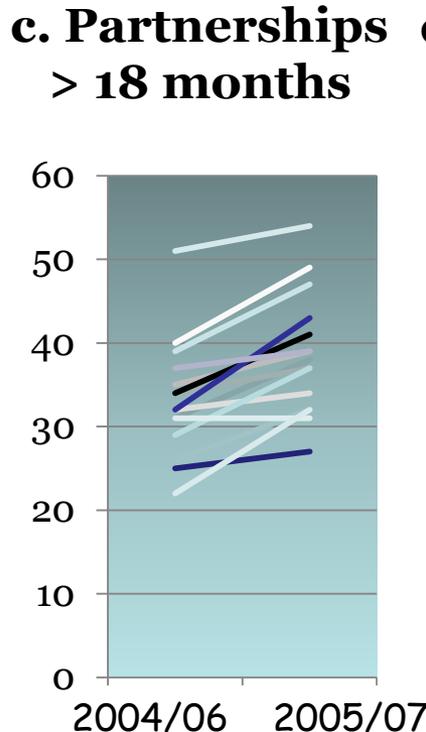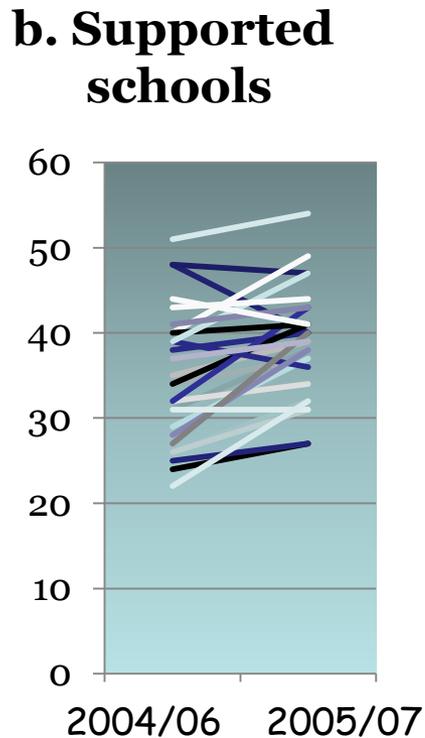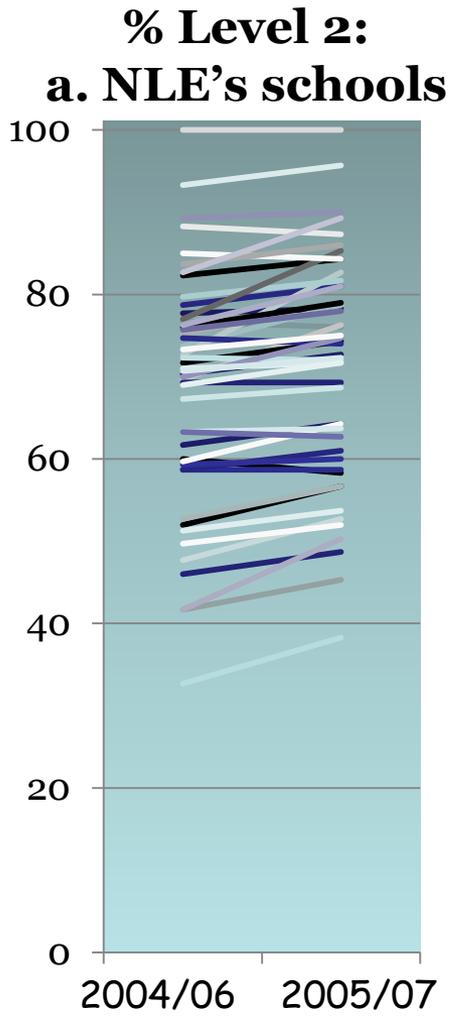
Year 11 standards in 15 secondary schools supported by system leaders since 2004/05

%5+ high grades

SYSTEM LEADER ENGAGEMENT
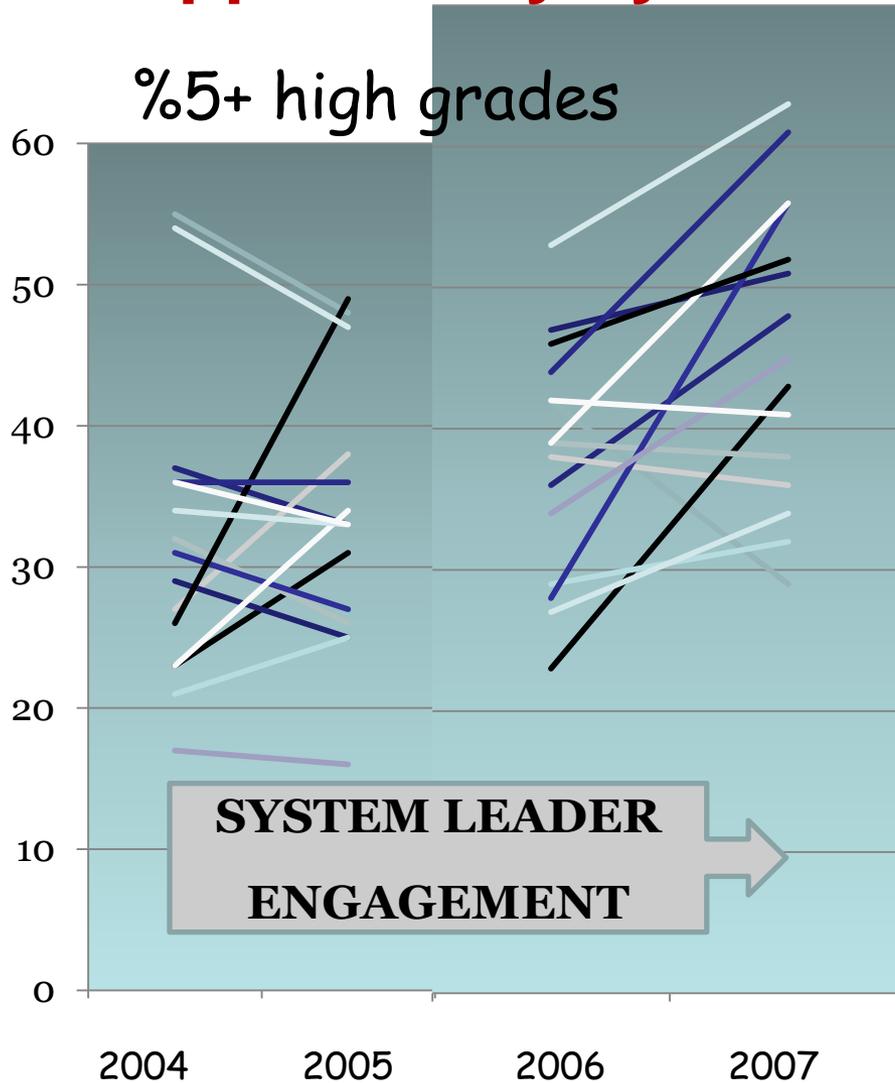
Some dysfunction can be repaired quickly; but raising standards takes time. Actions include:

- Identifying strengths and weaknesses
- Securing leadership
- Establishing order
- Engaging students
- Clarifying responsibilities and accountabilities
- Setting standards for teaching
- Weeding out incompetence
- Monitoring progress
- Promoting consistency

The nature of outreach school support interaction

DEEPER INVOLVEMENT

- **Hosting** visits by the partner school

- **Reciprocal** visits; shared planning, teaching, evaluating

- **Mentoring** new or inexperienced teachers

- **Coaching:** subject leadership or classroom practice

- **Joint inset**

- **Shared planning**

- **Data-wise monitoring and assessment**

- **Evaluation**

- **Leadership development**

- **Deployment** to the partner school; part or full-time, short or long term

- 'Permanent' **attachment**

TYPICAL PROCESSES

COACHING
MENTORING
MODELLING
TRAINING
PLANNING
EVALUATING
FACILITATING
EVALUATING
MONITORING
DIRECTING

Early conclusions

- **Effective, well led schools have great potential to lead others**

- **Some Principals have become specialists at helping other schools to improve**

- **Their focus is on pupils' needs, raising achievement, teaching and learning, a good curriculum diet & building leadership capacity**

- **Inter-school networks, partnerships, federations, trusts and collaboratives can lead to collective responsibility for all partners**

- **The benefits of school support work both ways.**

- **National and Local Leaders of Education have an established role in England**

System leadership and the bigger picture

We have tested the hypothesis that the resource for improving schools can be found within - and released from - the most effective schools.

Chris Day will consider the implications of system leadership for practice and development.....

1. **System leadership does not guarantee improvement**

- It takes time

- Evidence of school level benefits for pupils is only just emerging

- It needs leaders with particular knowledge and skills sets

- Systems of recruitment, succession planning and professional development are at present in embryonic stages across countries

2. **<u>System thinking</u>**

- Demands greater understanding and use of personal attributes, principles and attention to others not as a means only of achieving functional outcomes but as ends in themselves

- Requires leaders who think, plan and act beyond school borders

3. **The Primacy of the Principal**

- Principals are still perceived as the main source of leadership by governments and school key staff.

- Their values, leadership vision, strategies, emotional understandings and pedagogical understandings shape internal capacity building, teacher commitment and pedagogical practices and student and community aspirations and engagement, that are essential to school improvement.

- *System leaders are successful leaders that able to move their practices across schools*

4. **Repertoires of Practice**

- The case studies suggest that successful system leaders:
  - draw upon the same basic repertoire of leadership attributes and practices <u>but</u>
  - the ways they apply these – not the attributes and practices themselves – demonstrate responsiveness to, rather than dictation by, the contexts in which they work

5. <u>Promotion of Teacher Commitment and Quality</u>

- System leaders, as successful leaders, improve teaching and learning through their influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions

6. Leadership Qualities and Values:

- Successful system leaders are context sensitive not context dependent. They are context and culturally responsive in their use of leadership and management strategies

- They focus on care, equity and performance of pupils, combining:
    - improved school behaviour
    - academic, personal, social and affective dimensions
    - broadening participation
    - continuing attention to teacher quality
    - Inclusion

6. **<u>Leadership Qualities and Values:</u>**

- Successful system leaders combine logic and emotion in their work with people and their judgements for action

- Successful system leaders demonstrate qualities of hope and resilience

7. **Leadership Distribution and Trust: A result of system leadership**

- System leadership has a greater influence when it is widely distributed

- The forms, purposes and extent of distribution vary on a continuum from delegation with low trust to distribution with high trust

- Some forms of distributed leadership are more effective than others

- Different forms of distribution may be appropriate for schools and systems which are in different development phases

- A key responsibility of principals is to develop leadership cultures

8. **<u>Change as Internal Process of Reorientation, Transition and Transformation</u>**

- Departure

- Being in a new place

- New beginnings

9. **Differentiation, continuity and progression: some implications for leadership training and development**

- A specific focus on:
  - democratic values
  - knowledge of classroom pedagogies and their use by teachers
  - lateral leadership (networks, communities)
  - informed trust (levels of distribution and participation)
  - knowledge of the means for teacher learning, and development
  - knowledge of the leadership of change
  - emotional understanding and resilience
- Differentiation of needs related to:
  - Experience(s)
  - Sector(s)
  - Socio-economic context(s)
  - Phase of school development (layered leadership)

Leadership as a collective good rather than an individual property

Thank you