

# **Boston-Harvard Leadership Development Initiative (LDI)**

## **Year Four Evaluation**

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## **Boston-Harvard Leadership Development Initiative (LDI) Year Four Evaluation**

### **Executive Summary**

The Boston-Harvard Leadership Development Initiative (LDI) is a five year program designed to build the leadership capacity of educators in the Boston Public Schools in order to enhance overall academic achievement for students. Begun in 1997, the LDI is a partnership of the Harvard Graduate School of Education and the Boston Public Schools, with funding and support from FleetBoston Financial Foundation and Harvard University.

ROCKMAN *ET AL*, an independent research firm conducted an evaluation of Year 4 of the LDI program during the 2000-01 academic year. The evaluation focused primarily on school participants who were members of their school's Year 4 LDI teams, and on Year 4 program activities. The evaluation conducted an initial assessment of the reach and impact of the LDI program on the twelve LDI schools and its participating school team members, and the extent to which LDI activities reinforce and enhance the whole school reform initiatives in the Boston Public Schools. The evaluation also assessed the degree to which the program contributed to the professional development of the Harvard graduate students serving as LDI consultants to the schools, as well as enhanced the faculty and programs of the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

The data shows the LDI program to be one of value to teachers, administrators, GSE consultants, and Harvard faculty, putting educational theory into practice within the context of school reform. Though the motivation and objectives of each of these groups differed, all expressed the benefits of being part of a long-term project that provided a strong foundation for collaboration and exchange of ideas.

#### **Administrator Benefits:**

- Effectiveness – Overall, administrators noted improvements in their team leadership, communication, shared decision-making, interpersonal, and conflict resolution skills.
- School Community – Administrators noted an increased ability to work well with teachers and staff.

#### **Teacher Benefits:**

- Empowerment – Teachers expressed a heightened sense of control over change in their schools. Many teachers reported an increase in their understanding of school leadership and their role in implementing change.
- Professional Growth – Many teachers reported an enhanced use of instructional strategies, a sense of accomplishment when implementing best practices in their classrooms and an increased usage of theory to inform their teaching practices.

**School Site Benefits:**

- Focus on Critical Issues - Program events focused on critical issues in whole school reform and the BPS program.
- Six Essentials - LDI participants reported that their engagement in the program has facilitated improvements in the whole school reform program and the six essentials of BPS school reform.
- Professional Network – Both administrators and teachers valued the professional relationships fostered by school teams and felt that LDI increased their professional networks with colleagues at other schools.
- Focus on Instruction – A number of LDI participants reported a more positive and collegial climate focusing on instruction.
- Outcomes of Program Participation – Participants described how the LDI program strengthened the effectiveness of the instructional leadership team, helped schools interpret and plan action steps around state standardized testing, and stimulated site initiatives related to school change efforts.

**HGSE Consultant Benefits:**

- Training – Consultants emphasized the advantages of experiencing a program that allowed them to put theory into practice. This challenging, real-world context provided valuable experience and insight into integration and applied school change.
- Career Development – The experience gained in the schools provides consultants with the basis for further research and/or an impetus for working in schools as administrators or teachers.

**Harvard Faculty Benefits:**

- Research – LDI connects faculty and their research to practice, and serves as a reminder of the complexity and problems faced by teachers and administrators. Faculty asserted that this connection between theory and practice produced better-informed and more relevant research.
- HGSE Program Offering – Faculty noted the benefits of participation in LDI; HGSE students gain a real-world perspective on integration and applied social change. Students gain insight that assists many to further defining the direction of their career.

**Successful Design Features of the LDI Program:**

- Design and Implementation of Program - Key features and components of the program were valued by all program participants: multi-year commitment to schools, relevant and high quality program offerings, responsive and respectful relationship established with school participants, and informed yet independent perspective from outside the individual schools and school district offered by LDI project staff, consultants, and Harvard faculty.