

Lessons Learned

PARTNERING WITH MID-SIZE URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICTS



BALL FOUNDATION EDUCATION INITIATIVES | 2001 TO 2012

Dedication

The staff and directors of the Ball Foundation dedicate *Lessons Learned* to Carl and Vivian Elledge Ball, our founders. Their vision, hard work, and generosity in endowing our work in pursuit of *developing human potential* lives on today as it has for nearly four decades.

The purpose of this report is to share what has been learned over the course of the past decade in one of the two divisions of the Ball Foundation, *Education Initiatives*, in the hope that others will be able to utilize and build upon these lessons in a continuing quest for literacy for every young person in our country.



The Ball Foundation Education Initiatives 1991-2012

When G. Carl Ball retired in the early 1990s as the CEO of the family business, Ball Horticultural, he directed his ongoing interest in and passion for education into the already existing Ball Foundation that he and his wife Vivian Elledge Ball had started in 1975. Thus, began the work of Education Initiatives (Ball EI).

The Ball Foundation is an operating foundation as opposed to one that solicits and makes grants. When Ball EI was set in motion, Carl Ball recruited a professional staff combining experience in foundation work, education, and business as he built the Ball EI team. The team that did the work that is the subject of this report reflects that profile of diverse backgrounds and experience.

Over the course of what is now two decades, Ball EI was engaged in a variety of projects that reflect the variety of interests that Mr. Ball had concerning the questions that he held about America's system of education. A full account of those projects and areas of focus can be found on the Ball Foundation website at <http://www.ballfoundation.org/ei/history.html>.

This report, however, is based upon the work that Ball EI conducted during the eleven years from 2001 to 2012. During that period of time, the Foundation funded and Ball EI engaged in partnerships with six mid-size urban school districts to improve literacy through systemic capacity building with the school district as the unit of change.

- Springfield (IL) Public Schools (2001-2006)
- Chula Vista (CA) Elementary School District (2001-2006)
- Northview (MI) Public Schools (2002-2006)
- Allentown (PA) City Schools (2006-2008)
- Rowland (CA) Unified School District (2006-2011)
- New Haven (CA) Unified School District (2011-2012)

A detailed description of the partnerships in those districts can be found on the Ball Foundation website at <http://www.ballfoundation.org/ei/results.html>.

"I feel more empowered and have a different level of confidence in myself both as a leader and as a teacher in my classroom, in the school, and in the district."

— Rowland Teacher



Partnering With Mid-Size Urban School Districts

Ball Foundation Education Initiatives Approach

The work of Ball Foundation Education Initiatives can be distinguished from the mainstream of school reform in a number of important ways. The first major difference, as previously noted, is that Ball EI chose to work with entire school districts on systemic approaches that could impact multiple schools, thus making the district the unit of change by which the work would be designed and evaluated. Most of the school reform efforts of the past 30 years have been directed at single school sites where the school is identified as the unit of change for intervention and evaluation.

The decision to work with entire school districts with enrollments ranging from 3,000 to 18,000 students required Ball EI to build its approach in ways that call forward differences between its work and that of others who support school reform. Although not totally unique, the systemic work with entire school districts places the Ball Foundation's work in the company of a small number of other foundations with similar approaches. Partnering with mid-size urban districts produced additional distinguishing factors, including:

- Partnerships were multi-year in duration (5 years on average).
- Competencies of more than teachers and principals were considered as important targets for change (superintendent, district-level administrators, instructional support staff, and school board members).
- Building the capacity of the system to support teaching and learning was seen as equally important to building staff competencies.
- The work started with the assumption that most of the necessary expertise was already present in districts; thus, resources were invested to spread, deepen, and connect expertise.
- The work of Ball EI had to be coherent with ongoing district priorities as opposed to being an add-on.
- Sustainability of the efforts would require spanning changes in district and site-level leadership, adapting to changing state and federal mandates, and surviving the fiscal realities of the partner districts.

A more detailed description of the approach taken by Ball EI follows, but the general descriptors of Ball's work are:

- Focus on changing adult learning to change student learning
- Technical support in building processes and structures for the professional learning of staff at all levels of the system
- Teaching in the form of professional development activities for staff at all levels of the system

- Coaching of staff at various levels of the system to support professional learning
- Consulting support in the design or re-design of systemic processes and structures to support improved practice of staff at all levels of the system
- Beginning by working with the willing to create champions for change in the district
- Formative evaluation of the partnership to inform necessary adaptation
- Purchasing time for educators to collaborate and inquire together around instruction at classroom, school, and district levels
- Fiscal resources to support the above named work



The Principles and Organizing Framework of Ball EI's Approach to Partnering

Drawing on knowledge, research, and experience in the fields of human and adult learning, organizational development, systems and complexity, and educational change, Ball EI created a set of operating principles on which to base their partnerships with school districts. In the early 2000s, the ideas found in the table below were a set of tacit agreements among team members, but over time the information was refined and these shared agreements became the bedrock on which Ball EI's approach to partnering operated at all times.

In its partnership with school districts, Ball EI engaged educators in co-creating professional learning experiences designed from its set of principles. Organizational learning experiences designed with partners using these principles built professional competencies of people and the capacity of a school district to improve literacy achievement for every student.

The Principles for Organizational Learning and Change are not unique to Ball EI. What is unique is naming these specific principles and their application as design rules for professional learning experiences and processes of improvement. When applied together and in the presence of the relationships and patterns of connectedness they fostered, the Principles held the potential for fundamental systems change.

It is important to note that Ball EI developed a framework that guided the task of making the operating principles actionable. The Principles for Organizational Learning and Change were developed and operationalized in the context of:

Grounding Fields of Knowledge – theory, research and practice in human and adult learning, organization development, systems and complexity, and Ball Foundation Education Initiatives' partnership experience

Beliefs – basic assumptions that Ball Education Initiatives accepted as true for guiding the design and implementation of its approach to partnering

Implications for Design and Practice – ways of enacting the Principles that promoted organizational learning and change

Conditions that Support Organizational Learning and Change – expectations agreed to and enacted with partner school districts to increase the likelihood of success of Ball's partnerships through organizational growth and increased student literacy

Beliefs

We must be the change we want to see in the world.
 People and organizations are capable of creating their preferred future.
 You cannot transfer your energy for learning to others; you can only tap into their energy.
 Learning is done in the context of our humanity and the world around us.
 Organizations are living systems, capable of learning, creating, making meaning, and self-organizing.
 Complex organizations change when they engage with new information and new relationships.
 Learning organizations provide the conditions for adaptive, systemic, and generative change to happen.
 In learning organizations, leadership is distributed; collaboration is the way of doing business; and decision-making is shared by all stakeholders. Design allows a system to live and emergence to happen.
 Literacy is the cornerstone of learning and a gateway to empowerment.
 We can move from classrooms and schools that are islands of excellence, the current reality, to a system of schools that ensure high achievement for every student.

Principles

Build shared purpose
Create adaptive solutions
Use inquiry to guide practice
Build on assets
Access the capacity of stakeholders
Work in systemic ways
Attend to content and process

Implications of Design and Practice

Bring people together to discover what they really care about, to determine their highest aspirations for students, and invite them into something larger than themselves.
 Co-create with partners ways to acquire, share, and use information that generates new relationships and connections to solve problems.
 Bring people together in dialogue, learning, and reflection where they ask questions that matter, seek relevant information and data, and plan and implement actions with ongoing feedback.
 Identify and build on strengths, values, traditions, practices, and accomplishments.
 Engage staff, students, parents, and community members in learning about the district, sharing what is important and making choices about what is best for the school district.
 Engage people in ways that help them gain access to each other and to information and see interconnections among grade levels, subject areas, schools, families, neighborhoods, processes, and relationships.
 Create learning processes that engage people in making meaning and finding connections among information, people, and situations.

Conditions that Support Organizational Learning and Change

Participants have the authority to make substantive recommendations, decisions, or plans about the work.	District and school leaders actively engage in the work (co-design of processes, sponsorship, participation, and follow-through).
Key stakeholders – those with authority, access to or control over resources, expertise, information, or need – engage at all levels of the work.	Participants see the need for others' contributions and willingly work together.
Leaders see themselves as learners.	The school district brings coherence to improvement efforts.

Partnering with Mid-Size Urban School Districts – The Work of Ball Education Initiatives

Ball EI's theory of change for their school district partnerships stated that ***increasing the competencies of educators throughout a school district, in conjunction with the district's building capacity to create and sustain conditions in which competent staff effectively work together, results in improved literacy learning by every student.***

As a means for enacting that theory of change, Ball EI engaged its school district partners in the design and evaluation of co-created work based on three strategies and related outcomes. The following table illustrates the relationship of the strategies to the intended outcomes. The strategies were used in the design and implementation of the partnerships, and the intended outcomes formed the basis for evaluation of progress.

The Ball Approach to Organizational Learning and Change

Strategies	Intended Outcomes
Support educators in the continuous improvement of their shared practice	<u>Transfer</u> : people acting on what they are learning
Foster agency and responsibility for practice and student learning	<u>Ownership</u> : empowerment as a right and responsibility; connecting practice to shared purpose of the district
Connect people in their shared work	<u>Connectedness</u> : relationships that allow people to be connected to others, knowledge, information, and resources.

Using the Principles for Organizational Learning and Change as a framework for describing the partnership work of Ball EI, it is possible to name specific types of activities that occurred in the six partnerships over the span of 11 years. Because the work was co-created in each district by the partners (Ball EI and district stakeholders), these activities differed from district to district based on the context of each district. Although an activity is listed only once, readers should note that the vast majority of them fit in part within some or even all of the seven operating principles.

How did the partners Build Shared Purpose?

- Ball EI mentored and coached district leadership to engage stakeholders across their systems in developing, naming, and acting on shared agreements about instructional beliefs, priorities, and practice (instruction and the support of instruction) as an alternative to leaders naming priorities and directing activities.
- Stakeholders from throughout the district participated in assessing assets, determining areas of emphasis for improving teaching and learning, making sense of the information about how well they were doing, and in co-creating their shared agreements at all levels of the system.
- Teachers and principals helped name, define, and design their professional learning activities. Once this practice became the “way of doing things” in the partnerships, processes migrated to district activities outside or beyond the scope of the partnerships.
- District leaders learned to be clear and rigorous in calling out and living out shared agreements and driving district priorities in ways that supported and were coherent with the shared agreements.

How did the partners Create Adaptive Solutions?

- Planning and learning activities in the partnerships were conducted using processes for holding open possibilities for innovation and experimentation.
- Ball EI facilitated professional learning activities and coached their partners in order to build skill sets for adaptive action.
- The partners designed ways to de-isolate educator practice so that district staff could explore, inform, observe, and provide feedback to and with one another on ways to improve teaching and learning.
- Ball EI modeled adaptive action for its partners in the ongoing work of the partnerships. (They walked their talk).
- The partnerships built on district priorities using new adaptive processes and tools coached and mentored by Ball EI.

How did the partners Use Inquiry to Guide Practice?

- The planning and design work of the partnerships was cast in an inquiry mindset by Ball EI as it engaged new partners and was sustained for the life of the partnership.
- Ball EI facilitated a variety of small and large group conversations that engaged a variety of stakeholders in the partnerships built upon inquiry concepts.
- Ball EI facilitated the creation of teacher led communities of practice in some partnerships in which inquiry processes were foundational to how they operated.
- Ball EI modeled, taught, and coached inquiry concepts and skill sets to partners in a variety of settings, most especially in the design and operation of teacher communities of practice.

How did the partners Build on Assets?

- Ball EI facilitated with partners a formal assessment of assets that engaged a wide variety of district stakeholders and informed the co-design of the partnerships with the asset assessment.
- By engaging stakeholders in the planning and design of each partnership, Ball EI explicitly named the assets of the system as the foundation on which improvement and change would occur.
- Consistently and often Ball EI stated that its intent was not to “fix” its partners.
- Partnership goals, action plans, and evaluations reflected the identified assets in partner districts, and over time partners became much clearer about how and to what degree identified assets could be used to drive change.

How did the partners Access the Capacity of Stakeholders?

- First and foremost, stakeholders at all levels of the system were given voice in working together to identify high priority improvement activities. Over time, top down directives were significantly reduced as the only way for naming priorities for action.
- Those working for improved educator competency were networked together in a variety of ways that crossed traditional boundaries in the system that once defined silos of isolated activity.
- With assistance from Ball EI, the partners created, nurtured, and sustained collaborative processes and structures as their way of doing business.

How did the partners Work in Systemic Ways?

- Ball EI entered into these partnerships with the expectation that the districts would involve a variety of stakeholders in the work, assuring that people with the authority to allocate resources, people with expertise and diverse perspectives, and those who would be impacted by changes to be made were involved in assessing assets, designing activities, implementation, evaluation, and adaptation.
- Boards of education were engaged in some partnership activities and were fully apprised of ongoing work on a consistent basis.
- Employee bargaining units were welcomed into the partnership work as important stakeholders.
- With Ball EI’s assistance, the partners adapted existing structures or created new ones in connected networks.

How did the partners Attend to Content and Process?

- Professional learning of educators in the districts was one key focal point of partnership activity, and its value came to be seen both for the rigor and quality of the content and the processes in and by which staff engaged peers in co-learning – they learned with and from one another.
- The success of partnership activities was determined by evaluating the degree to which learning and change reflected transfer, ownership, and connectedness, factors requiring constant attention to the interactions between content and process.
- Over time, with coaching and the critical friendship of Ball EI, the partner districts created a systemic culture that reflected a balance in the perceived value of both what was done and how it was done. Actions that build systemic capacity became primary drivers of the work.

The Lessons Learned by Ball EI and Partners

Throughout the course of its partnerships with school districts, Ball EI utilized the services of outside evaluators to conduct formative assessments of the strategies and intended outcomes of each initiative. Those formative evaluations were utilized to inform ongoing adaptation to the partnerships. The indicators of progress measured in these evaluations were described as *leading indicators of change* – changes in the learning and practice of the educators in these districts within the context of the intended outcomes of individual competencies and the overall capacity of the school district.

Significant gains were made in achieving outcome targets relative to the leading indicators of change by the end of every partnership. Even more encouraging, the early partnering districts sustained those efforts and built upon them in even more powerful ways after the partnerships ended. The lessons learned reported here relate directly to the formal and informal assessment of the leading indicators of change – changes in the competencies of the educators and in the capacity of the system to create and sustain conditions in which competent staff work effectively. The list is informed by members of the Ball EI team and by representatives of all of the partnerships who convened in March 2012 to reflect on what the learning had been in and across the partnerships.

The intended outcomes in the following table serve as a primary lens used for reflecting on the lessons learned in Ball EI's partnering work.

The Ball Approach to Organizational Learning and Change

Strategies	Intended Outcomes
Support educators in the continuous improvement of their shared practice	<u>Transfer</u> : people acting on what they are learning
Foster agency and responsibility for practice and student learning	<u>Ownership</u> : empowerment as a right and responsibility; connecting practice to shared purpose of the district
Connect people in their shared work	<u>Connectedness</u> : relationships that allow people to be connected to others, knowledge, information, and resources.

Strategy 1: Support educators in the continuous improvement of their shared practice leading to Transfer – people acting on what they are learning

- 1. The design of our schools and districts has led to largely isolated and isolating environments for those who teach and those who support teaching, but it is possible to build new processes and structures to de-isolate practice. Site leadership teams, teacher-led communities of practice, principal cohorts, classroom walkthroughs, and team and department time dedicated to professional learning are examples of some of those processes established during Ball EI's partnerships.*
- 2. Processes that de-privatize the practice of teachers and those who support teaching lead to highly effective educator practice and strengthen the ability of schools and districts to scale up and scale out new ideas.*
- 3. Attending to both content and process may feel slow at first to staff members of organizations in which simply staying in motion has been confused for non-adaptive change. The old way of doing things may seem faster or more efficient without actually being either.*
- 4. Because learning (both for adults who work in schools and districts and for the students who are served by them) can be unpredictable, messy, and non-linear, it becomes incumbent upon those who design and lead schools and districts to have skill sets for leading complex, adaptive systems.*

Strategy 2: Foster agency and responsibility for practice and student learning leading to Ownership – empowerment as a right and responsibility; connecting practice to shared purpose of the district

- 1. Using a system's assets as the basis for capacity building work offers a viable, successful, and preferred alternative to "stick and carrot" compliance models of school reform driven by mandates. Commitment driven schools and districts will outperform compliance driven schools and districts in the long run.*

2. Distributing leadership through and across the traditional layers of schooling supports all three critical factors of professional learning – transfer, ownership, and connectedness.
3. Consistently inviting all stakeholders who are impacted by a decision into decision making processes (naming the issues, using information to frame alternatives, and reaching consensus on what to do) builds agency and ownership for those who are engaged and for groups they may represent.
4. Connecting the district's goal of building a professional staff of educators with the work of a teachers' union to professionalize teaching can lead to positive organizational outcomes for the district, for the union, for union members, and for the students who benefit from high quality teaching and learning.

Strategy 3: Connect people in their shared work leading to Connectedness - relationships that allow people to be connected to others, knowledge, information, and resources.

1. Capacity building efforts across a school district require visible champions who maintain rigorous focus and live out those shared agreements established for all district staff. A team of district-level champions will be compromised by a superintendent who does not champion the change in both words and actions.
2. The institutions that we have created in the past to support student learning (schools and school districts) were not designed to foster adaptation or innovation, so if we expect actions of that nature from them we must redesign them for that purpose.
3. Sustainable change is possible when districts have learning, community, and commitment in the working environments of their adult staff who can then create the same conditions for students.
4. Collaborative processes and structures in and of themselves do not guarantee better outcomes, but when based on shared agreements and when enacted with focus and rigor over time, they do result in sustainable school improvement.
5. By attending to both content and process districts can alter how they do business, replacing hierarchy, bureaucracy, and top-down decision making with connected networks, adaptive work teams, and decisions made as close as possible to the areas of impact by those with the responsibility for implementation. (Mindset and culture are terms that some use to describe these phenomena.)

As Ball EI passes on its lessons learned to others, members of the team who enacted the Ball Foundation's approach to partnering with mid-size urban school districts acknowledge that the need for learning never stops and the need to apply the learning derived from the work we do give all of us a chance to be better at it in its next iteration. Ball EI team members humbly submit that these lessons learned are in no way the definitive or last word on school improvement. Team members believe these lessons can and should be useful to those supporting what Michael Fullan names as capacity building approaches to systemic change.

"Our leadership team has gotten together with the leadership team in the high school that we feed into. Conversations with the high school have made us think about how it is that we are preparing these students. Based on this, we've changed the way we teach."

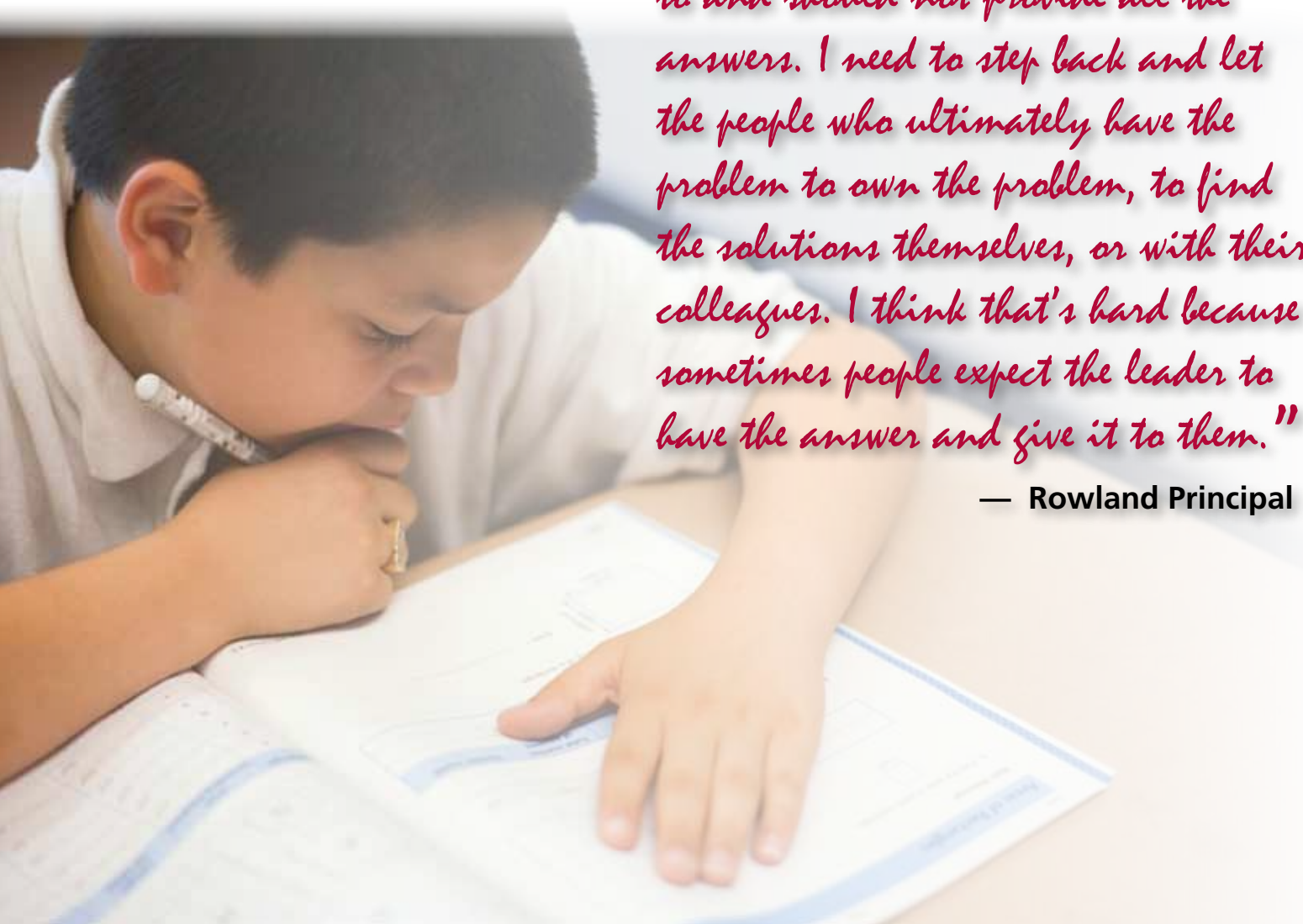
— Rowland Teacher



Results Achieved in the Partnerships

Student achievement is a *trailing indicator* of professional learning and organizational change approaches. In building the competencies of educators while building the capacity of the district, Ball EI used a theory of change in which changes in adult competencies and system capacity were expected to precede changes in student performance. The districts partnering with Ball EI used the statewide test scores in language arts, reading, and writing to which they were being held responsible under No Child Left Behind to mark the progress in the partnerships. The following trends in student achievement occurred.

- Changes in adult practice were a leading indicator to the improvements in student test scores – improvements in student achievement were forecasted by changes in educator practice.
- In the earliest partnerships where Ball EI worked with cohorts of schools rather than every school in the district at one time, the schools in the Ball EI cohorts showed positive student achievement gains that were statistically significant when compared to schools in the same district that were not in a Ball EI cohort.
- Gains in student test scores accelerated in the majority of these districts in the fourth or fifth year of the partnerships.
- These districts sustained or increased positive trend lines in their student test data beyond the life of the partnerships.
- One Ball EI partner district, Chula Vista Elementary District, continues to show student achievement gains that outpace similar districts anywhere in the U.S. Chula Vista Elementary District also continues to be an exemplar in continuing to adapt, refine, and invent new ways for systemic capacity building.



"I've also learned that I do not need to and should not provide all the answers. I need to step back and let the people who ultimately have the problem to own the problem, to find the solutions themselves, or with their colleagues. I think that's hard because sometimes people expect the leader to have the answer and give it to them."

— Rowland Principal

Implications of Ball EI's Lessons Learned

The staff of Ball EI, its many partners and collaborators, and the directors of the Ball Foundation are hopeful that others interested in systemic approaches to school change, and especially those with the goal of improving literacy for every student, will find useful and actionable ideas in these lessons learned. Some of these lessons may inform the educators who staff schools and school districts. Others may inform organizations that include but are not limited to foundations that support school change efforts. There also is optimism that some of these lessons can become a part of a new dialogue among those who make policy at the local, state, and national levels regarding their role in crafting policy that makes what really works the core of the policies that guide teaching and learning in the U.S. Often, constituents such as parents, citizens whose tax dollars pay for public schooling, and members of the business community who both support schools and depend on them for skilled workers are not mentioned in a conversation about school change. They, too, are named here in what possible implications for them might be.

Possible Implications for All Educators – Informed by the growing awareness that the system of schooling that we have built in the U.S. is largely obsolete and outdated, new approaches to building the capacity of redesigned schools and districts continue to emerge. The first ripples of a movement to act on the knowledge about how to re-think and redesign learning and schooling in the 21st Century are available to those who see the need for going beyond our traditional efforts at school reform that continue to fall very short of the goals intended for them. Acting on these new ideas will require commitments to new ways of thinking and new ways of acting – making learning the work of all stakeholders. Meeting the needs of all learners will require different skill sets, courage, persistence, and innovative thinking. All of those requirements are in reach of those who choose to have access to them.

Possible Implications for Teachers and Teacher Unions – Teachers today are quite aware of the shortcomings of the systems in which they work. Many are frustrated and feel beset upon by other stakeholders of learning and schooling. Progressive teacher leaders exist, including a strong cohort of union leaders, committed to making teaching a true profession. The lessons learned by Ball EI indicate that all stakeholders benefit when the conditions are created for professionalizing teaching.

Possible Implications for Foundations and Those Who Support School Change – In instances where those who support school change have a goal to scale up or scale out their work, the lesson of the impact of systemic approaches taken over the long term could inform decisions about program and funding priorities. The complexity and large scale of efforts to reform America's schools have influenced reform support organizations to now consider working together in order to extend reach and impact. That is a positive trend to build upon.

Possible Implications for Policymakers – Much of the policy making in U.S. schools is part of a political process that more often than not is attracted to quick fixes and the temptation to believe that schools can be reformed by assembling all the worthwhile "parts" from successful models of schooling in every school or district. Policy mandates very often ignore the learning and adaptive processes necessary of complex systems to make new ideas work in their context. Timelines often are much too short for mandated changes, and realistic expectations are dismissed as coming at too high a price in terms of either money or time. Capacity building approaches to school improvement have been shown to work on a large scale in other countries and on a more limited scale in the U.S. Policymakers have a clear choice ahead: to continue doing what has not produced the well intentioned outcomes of the past 30 years; or to recognize the part that policy plays in being either a barrier to or a positive enabler of change. More of the same policy making will produce more of the same results.

Possible Implications for Parents – When parents are invited by a school or district into productive conversations about their children's learning, it is likely that both the school system and the parents benefit. Parents should expect (demand if necessary) their place in the conversations about their children's education. Parent support for the learning of their children is a key indicator of student success (of the lack thereof). When parents engage their right to be key players in the process of schooling and learning, and when they also assume responsibility for their unique roles, the chance of successful learning by their children increases.

Possible Implications for Members of the Business Community – Members of the business community often times fit within other categories of stakeholders already named. It is likely that members of the business community understand how long term and short term goals both are necessary to improved organizational performance. Members of the business community often are in an important position to influence policymakers, directly and indirectly. Those who can support seeing the funding of schools as a long term investment can be of critical importance to being part of and influencing decisions about the priorities of student learning in the 21st Century. Advocacy from this group for redesigning school organizations to be successful in today's complex world would be helpful to all the other stakeholder groups.

Major Influencers of Ball's Approach to Partnering

Ball Foundation Education Initiatives often describes its work of the past decade as applied action research. In developing and adapting its approach to partnering for literacy improvement for all students through whole systems change, Ball EI selectively integrated ideas from a variety of fields including education reform, learning theory (student and adult), school effectiveness, organizational learning, organizational development, leadership, systems theory, and human systems dynamics. The way Ball Education Initiatives incorporated the fields of knowledge and practice that informed its work largely is unique, but the knowledge base of that work certainly has been and continues to be available to those who are interested in working for and supporting school change.

The major influencers of the approach developed and implemented by Ball EI include:

- **Peter Senge** – Ball EI committed to engage in its work as a learning organization based upon Peter Senge's work. The team also held the vision that schools and districts also could become learning organizations.
- **Michael Fullan** – Michael Fullan contributed his insight to a systemic approach to school reform throughout the decade of Ball EI's partnering work. Ball EI has continuously used Fullan's work on what he now names as capacity building to inform the design and implementation of its partnerships.
- **Jeff Nelsen and Amalia Cudeiro** – Ball EI contracted with companies that Jeff Nelsen and Amalia Cudeiro lead (first Focus on Results and later Targeted Leadership Consulting) to support work in three of its partnerships. Their work helped to build strong, sustainable continuous improvement cultures in those districts based upon the development of site leadership teams and distributed leadership.
- **Margaret Wheatley** – Meg Wheatley helped build awareness in many fields of endeavor that the mechanistic view that we once held of our institutions and organizations is man-made as opposed to the product of some universal truth. Ball EI used Wheatley's descriptive work to inform its evolving view of how systems work and in helping others to design alternatives to bureaucracy and control-based leadership models.
- **Myron Rogers** – Myron Rogers is another who was contracted by Ball EI to assist in the implementation of one district partnership. He, like Margaret Wheatley, informed our viewpoint about alternatives to command-and-control systems. Specifically, Myron Rogers worked with Ball EI in developing its approach to building communities of practice of teachers and principals.
- **Etienne Wegner** – Ball EI's design of communities of practice is based on the work of Etienne Wegner, considered by many as the foremost authority on the topic. Ball Education Initiatives began its development of communities of practice in earlier partnerships and fully supported their implementation in its partnership with Rowland (CA) Unified School District.
- **Sandra Janoff** – The recipient of the Outstanding Global Work Award in 2011, Future Search was created by Sandra Janoff and Marvin Weisbord. Ball EI team members used many Future Search processes in its partnership work, and Sandra Janoff served as a valuable coach and mentor of several team members.
- **Peter Block** – Ball EI utilized the work of Peter Block to inform its approach to bringing all voices into the room for conversations that really matter. Peter Block's approaches to empowerment of those not previously given voice and to organizational stewardship became keystones in Ball EI's partnerships. He also provided valuable insight to the team based on his book *The Answer to How Is Yes*.
- **Hallie Preskill** – Hallie Preskill taught the Ball EI team to use narrative as a powerful tool for knowledge capture and to use Appreciative Inquiry in its work with partners. She taught these skills to the team, coached work in one partnership, and co-authored the Ball Foundation publication *Becoming the Change: What One Organization Working to Transform Educational Systems Learned About Team Learning and Change* with Rex Babiera, an EI team member.
- **Glenda Eoyang** – Human Systems Dynamics (HSD) is a field of knowledge and practice created by Glenda Eoyang. Members of Ball EI learned to use HSD processes and protocols from her and incorporated them in Rowland (CA) Unified School District. Ball EI and the Human Systems Dynamics Institute co-partnered in a sixteen-month-long engagement about leading adaptive change in the New Haven (CA) Unified District in 2011-2012, working with Royce Holladay and Leslie Patterson.
- **Stephanie Pace Marshall** – Stephanie Pace Marshall served as a thought partner to Ball EI for most of the past decade, and her insight on leadership informed the thinking and practice of Ball EI. She has created a new narrative about what is possible for bringing learning and schooling to life when we create and nurture the conditions for generativity and creativity – her defined role for leaders.

The National Center for Literacy Education

The Directors of the Ball Foundation began to engage in conversation about a legacy project for Ball EI several years ago. After exploring a number of options for supporting an initiative that would carry on the foundation's commitment to literacy learning for all students and the systemic approach implemented by Ball EI for the past decade, the decision was made to fund and support with its experience and lessons learned the creation and launch of the **National Center for Literacy Education (NCLE)**. The new organization began operations in November 2011.

The following excerpt provides more detailed information about NCLE.

The National Center for Literacy Education (NCLE) has built a coalition of stakeholders representing leading professional associations in the disciplines, operating and grant making foundations that focus on capacity building in schools, and educational organizations who support educational analysis and professional learning. These 30 organizations are working together to identify and share the plans, practices, support systems, and assessments used by educator teams working to improve literacy learning. NCLE will celebrate the work of successful school teams across the country that are achieving remarkable results in advancing literacy learning, and share what is learned with education policymakers.

Literacy Education Reform from the Grassroots

NCLE will provide support to and compile evidence about how educators working in cross-disciplinary teams design and implement plans to support literacy learners in every classroom. By sharing stories from these educator teams, NCLE will not only make visible teaching and learning practices, it will highlight the organizational conditions and community support that make real progress possible.

Supporting School Change

NCLE is providing the in Learning Exchange (www.literacyinlearning.org) as a free resource to all educator teams. All educators are invited to use the free site to build or further develop a team in their school, district, or across schools/districts, or in their out-of-school setting. Educators that embrace the challenge of sponsoring and supporting a team will be eligible to apply for recognition and support as Centers for Literacy Education.

Sustaining Improved Learning

To complement the gains observed in participating schools and teams, NCLE will fund collaborative research projects and share findings with policy leaders at all levels. Individualized and personal feedback will be provided to teams who seek information or advice about their work. And NCLE stakeholder organizations will make available what we learn from participating teams through our peer-reviewed publications, seminars, and colloquies.

Join the NCLE and its allies in writing a future for literacy education that puts the expertise of educators and the interests of students and their families at the center of our work!



Other Accounts of the Work of Ball EI

As Ball EI nears the sunset of its work, members of the EI team have written or developed publications that go deeper into and expand upon the work described in *Lessons Learned*. The following titles offer additional information to those wishing to further explore topics and areas of inquiry introduced here.

An End to the Industrialization of Schooling: New Ways for Organizing Learning in the 21st Century (2013) by Robert C. Hill, published by the Ball Foundation (in development)

Becoming the Change: What One Organization Working to Transform Education Systems Learned About Team Learning and Change (2010) by Rex Babiera and Hallie Preskill, published by The Ball Foundation

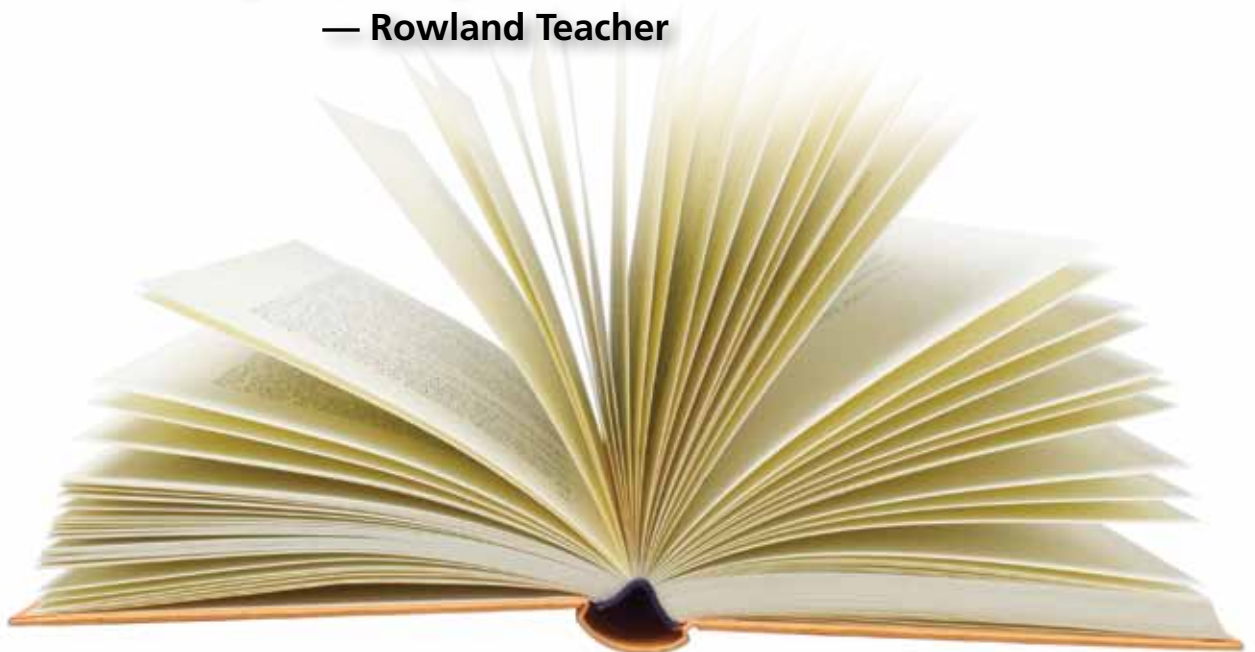
Bringing Literacy Home (2010) edited by KaiLonnie Dunsmore and Douglas Fisher, published by the International Reading Association

Taking Inquiry to Scale: An Alternative to Traditional Approaches to School Reform (2013) by Michael J. Palmisano, published by the National Center for Literacy Education (in press)

Designed to Learn: Twenty-first Century Remodeling Projects for Every Educator (2012) by Rex Babiera, to be released as an e-book and interactive website (in development)

"I have developed a deep appreciation for individual voices no matter their position. Every individual voice brings greater clarity to the group. By hearing all voices, we enter a new reality that would not have been possible without all voices in the group being heard."

— Rowland Teacher



More About the Ball Foundation

The Ball Foundation was created by G. Carl Ball and his wife Vivian Elledge Ball nearly 40 years ago for the purpose of carrying on research about human aptitudes based on work begun by a pioneer in that field who was their personal friend. The first of two divisions of the Ball Foundation, *Career Vision*, remains a leader today in assessing human aptitudes and in advancing understanding of how using knowledge of human aptitudes can assist in realizing individual and collective human potential.

As the owner and CEO of a multi-national business, Ball Horticultural, headquartered in West Chicago, Illinois, Carl Ball also was a staunch advocate for education. He was a founding member of the Board of Directors at the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy and the Corridor Partnership for Excellence in Education. Thus, no one was surprised when Mr. Ball began to act on his interest in education at the time of his retirement as the leader of the family business. In the early 1990s he began the work of the foundation in education, and over time that work grew to a size that warranted a second division at the Ball Foundation – *Education Initiatives*.

Carl Ball set high expectations that he called “stretch goals” for himself and all with whom he worked. His attitudes and work ethic helped the family-owned business started by his father George J. Ball in 1905 become a world leader in horticulture. Today, Ball Corporation is known for the superior varieties it supplies to professional greenhouse growers as seed, cuttings, and young plants so they can produce high-quality bedding plants, potted flowering plants, and cut flowers for the consumer market. Ball Horticultural Company’s global family of breeders, research and development teams, seed and vegetative producers, and distribution companies has a strong presence on six continents in over 20 countries.

Ball is a world leader in new plant innovation and has introduced many products that have had a positive impact on the success of growers, retailers, and landscapers. Every member of the Ball team proudly takes part in creating flowers that help gardeners color their world. You can learn more about Ball Horticultural at <http://ballhort.com>.

Carl Ball brought a similar vision from his professional life to Education Initiatives. He traveled down many roads in the pursuit of more productive ways to educate children and youth. Two things remained constant for him throughout that journey. The first was his passion for developing literacy for every student. The second was his respect and admiration for teachers – viewpoints that grew more passionate after he spent time substitute teaching after his retirement as CEO of Ball Horticultural. Carl was perplexed by the small investment in research and development that he witnessed in education, and he wondered aloud how teachers could be expected to “polish the stone” of their practice with so little time to learn and work together. One important reason Carl Ball had for starting Ball EI was to influence change related to his inquiry.

“The most important thing has been having opportunities to learn together. The foundation made us hold a mirror to our own practices and that has helped us manage our change process.”

— Springfield Principal

Ball Foundation
526 North Main Street
Glen Ellyn, IL 60137
www.ballfoundation.org