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Media Backgrounder: The National School Administration Manager Project

ABOUT THE NATIONAL SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION (SAM) PROJECT

The National SAM Project is a pilot program funded by The Wallace Foundation and participating districts. The program 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.

STATUS OF THE PILOT

The pilot effort is under way in select districts and schools in nine Wallace partner states – 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 inform next steps for the work.

PROJECT ORIGINS

The SAM Project began in Louisville, KY, in 2002 as the Alternative School Administration Study, which looked at conditions that prevented principals from making instructional leadership their priority and developed strategies to help change those conditions.

THE FIVE CORE COMPONENTS OF THE SAM PROJECT

While the SAM Project can be implemented in different ways, there are five pieces that are essential to successful implementation. They are:

- 1) **Willingness by districts and principals to commit** to increasing time for instructional leadership;
- 2) **Baseline Time/Task Analysis Data Collection™** to determine how principals spend time;
- 3) **Principals' engagement with a SAM** – a new school administration manager or an existing staff member – to shift managerial duties and increase principal's time on leading instructional improvement;
- 4) **External coaching** to discuss progress and challenges and identify training needs; and
- 5) **Follow-up Time/Task Analysis Data Collection** one year later to assess improvement.

INITIAL RESULTS

Feedback from principals and superintendents in the SAM Project has been positive. One Iowa principal said, "I can't imagine life without this." Three years after joining the project, principals in Louisville, KY, report spending over 70 percent of their time on instructional issues. Initial data from three Kentucky schools in the SAM pilot find that their increases on state assessments outpaced the average increases for their districts and the state. A more complete picture of the project and its impact will be made available when the review is complete in mid-2009.

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