A Vision for Leadership Development: Social Emotional Learning and Equity

A LEAD interview with David Adams, CEO Urban Assembly*

**LEAD:** Congratulations on your new role as CEO of Urban Assembly! You started in March and it's now May, can you speak a little more about your focus and priorities for the first few months and beyond?

**David Adams:** We have a couple of priorities. The first is understanding how to support our teachers and our principals as they welcome students back this fall; that means developing supportive learning environments and ensuring that students and teachers rebuild the relationships and connections that undergird all learning. This also includes supporting our principals around some of the logistics that are necessary to make sure that everybody is safe and protected as they come back to school.

**LEAD:** Could you take a moment to share your vision for leadership and leadership development in your current role?

**DA:** Well first, everybody deserves great leaders and leadership is about clarity; that's what we're trying to accomplish here in the context of Urban Assembly. Our mission is clear and that is to provide social and economic mobility for young people, by improving public education. That means that we will invest in our schools and our principals so that they are able to develop solution sets to challenges. That also means that we will take on and assess policies that may be serving as barriers to public education, that are constraining students' abilities to be successful. This means that we will write about, talk about, and share the things that we learn so that we are giving solutions to anybody who wants to learn from them. The Assembly is committed to taking what we know and sharing it out with our partners across the country so that we can get better for all kids, not just our kids.
**LEAD:** Please share and/or describe your vision for equity and excellence in schools.

**DA:** One of the key things when we talk about equity is that we need to continue investing in the things that matter and in the systems that help all students grow. There is a notion right now that students are experiencing learning loss and I would like to reframe that as curricula loss. Many students enter schools who are not at grade level in New York City, so this is not a new challenge. It is, however, a question of how well schools have invested in understanding where their students are and organizing personalized opportunities for growth that recognize where they are and fill the gaps with high quality teaching and learning supports. We also need to invest in the quality of assessments, not to label kids but to support kids so that we can understand how to support their areas of strength. Something I also want to see as people come back into schools in the context of equity is a renewed understanding of what learning really looks and feels like.

**LEAD:** What do you feel are the most important leadership attributes for leaders to have now and what is in your toolkit for building leadership capacity?

**DA:** Leadership is about providing purpose, motivation, direction, and clarity. It is important to understand how to move people from where they are to where they need to be by offering feedback around their work to support people in being motivated about their growth. Our job as leaders is to name that growth so folks can recognize how to continue achieving growth. As leaders we need to be able to draw a picture that everybody understands and can envision. Clarity is what gives folks the ability to take initiative and solve the kinds of problems that they need to solve in order to move learning forward.

*About: The Urban Assembly is a partner to the New York City Department of Education. Its mission is to advance students’ economic and social mobility by improving public education.*

---

**LEAD Learning**

**LEADing talent, advancing achievement!**

The Office of Leadership, Empowerment, and Development (LEAD) had an exciting month of May LEADing talent. LEAD began its conclusion of the year-long professional learning for its New Principal Academy and Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent groups. Simultaneously, the Division of the First Deputy Chancellor’s Equity and Excellence EdPacesetters, engaged in closing their Master Class learning with Dr. Tahira Dupree Chase, Superintendent of Schools | Greenburgh Central School District as lead facilitator on “Leadership Qualities Needed Post-Pandemic”. Dr. Bryan Beverly, Director of K-12 Outreach at Michigan State University also joined this Master class to facilitate learning on “Building Trust”. The Equity and Excellence EdPacesetters cohort II learning culminated in the following Capstone Presentations:

- **Developing Leadership Capacity** in Support of ELLs, SWDs, and Addressing Disproportionality presented by Nicholas Marinacci, Julie Mchedlishvili, and David Norment and mentored by Executive Superintendent Karen Watts; Envisioning Families as Partners for Educational Outcomes and Opportunities for Children and Communities presented by Steven Aragona, Tamra Collins, Hoa Tu, and Jennifer Yonkers and mentored by Dr. George Perry, Jr.; and last but not least, Envisioning Engaging Professional Learning and Capacity Building for Principals and/or Assistant Principals.
presented by Michael Mercanti-Anthony, Nakia Haskins, Rachelle Lewis, and John Sullivan and mentored by Executive Superintendent Dr. Mauricière de Govia.

The month closed with the Assistant Principal presentation and celebration featuring the Inspired Leaders, facilitated by Una-Kariim A. Cross with inspirational remarks by Chancellor Meisha Ross Porter, First Deputy Chancellor Donald Conyers, and CSA Vice-president, Henry Rubio. The inaugural Assistant Principal leadership cohort received mentorship by principals Dr. Ramon Gonzalez and Ed Tom and former principal Dr. Reginald Landeau, Jr. The culminating event brought together the three LEAD Assistant Principal professional learning groups: The New Assistant Principal Academy, The Inspired Leaders, and The APLI Chat Group. The final APLI Leadership & Literature Chat facilitated by Rex Bobbish offered tips and strategies for job-seeking Assistant Principals looking to leverage their leadership skills to advance achievement.

---

**LEAD Launching**

*LEAD is proud to share the launch of additional capacity building opportunities under our umbrella!*

The New York City Department of Education Center for Leadership Development (CFLD) - as part of and in collaboration with LEAD - strives to nurture leadership in service of the 32 community school districts (CSD) that comprise this great city. A leader’s ability to understand the rich history, demographic composition, and unique characteristics of each CSD allows for leadership that is part of the community and serves to inspire, promote and directly impact student achievement as an agent of change within that community. The CFLD will focus on cultivating talent from teacher leaders through district level leadership and work towards cultivating leadership for community, equity, excellence and student achievement for community school districts.

The Principal Technology Fellowship is designed to provide principals with an opportunity to develop, execute, work and reflect on technological leadership practices. This program supports best practices and strategies that can transform the effectiveness and efficiency of various organizational, operational, and instructional elements using design system methodologies that were launched with a cohort of 55 principals this spring. The community of leader learners that participate in this program will use the insights and access they acquire during these sessions to foster innovation and creative practices using technology for others within their community and constituencies for overall school improvement.

The Aspiring Superintendent Bootcamp (ASB) welcomed an inaugural cohort of 15 leaders for its spring launch, providing an opportunity to current or former school building leaders desiring to become New York City Department of Education superintendents to pursue their aspirations. Beginning in the fall of 2021, ASB will also launch its five-month Bootcamp with selected participants who have a record of demonstrated impact of leadership as evidenced in student achievement, leadership capacity building, and an intentional focus on excellence and equity for all. The Bootcamp is designed for tenured principals and district/central level leaders who possess a School District Administrator’s License (SDA) or a School District Leadership License (SDL).
Did You Know?

In service of equity and diversity, during and beyond designated heritage months, the NYCDOE Asian community, through the Advancing Asians through Empowerment & Identity (AAPI) Employee Resource Group (ERG)* hosted a State of AAPI event. It was a DOE panel discussion featuring Superintendent Jennifer Carreon, Superintendent Carry Chan, and Principal Ed Tom, where they spoke about their experiences as an Asian American in the DOE.

*The Advancing Asians through Empowerment & Identity (AAPI) Employee Resource Group is a group of DOE employees who are committed to fostering dialogue to enhance awareness and understanding of Asian American Pacific Islander identity while celebrating the complexities within this diaspora. It seeks to support and develop AAPI employees across the NYC DOE and create a network to build capacity for advocacy and outreach within NYC AAPI communities. For more information or to be added to the listserv contact the AAPI ERG at: aapi@schools.nyc.gov

On June 1, 2021, President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. signed a proclamation making June Caribbean-American Heritage Month. LEAD is taking a moment to acknowledge our Caribbean colleagues in the work with honor and celebration of culture and community as we collectively work to shape our future.

Principal Leadership in Action!

The spring edition of Principal Promising Practices spotlights the work of participants from the Division of the First Deputy Chancellor’s Leadership Book Club for Principals. The Leadership Book Club study centered on the text Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive Through the Dangers of Change by Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linksy. The March culminating session was an all-principal led and facilitated session. Chapter facilitation was led by Principals Veronica Coleman of Kurt Hahn Expeditionary Learning School and Carl V. Manalo of Khalil Gibran International Academy. Other session participants include Principals Dr. Dawn Brooks-DeCosta of Thurgood Marshall Academy Lower School, Dr. Lisette Caesar of Mosaic Preparatory Academy, Yecenia Cardoza-Delarosa of Gregorio Luperon for Science and Mathematics High School, Jennifer Logan of Public School 41 The Stephanie A. Vierno School, Erin Lynch of Seth Low IS 96! In this issue we are featuring Principals Erin Lynch and Dr. Dawn Brooks-DeCosta.

Principal Dr. Dawn Brooks-DeCosta | Thurgood Marshall Academy Lower School

In Her Own Words!

In meeting with our parents to share our instructional goals for their feedback, they expressed that some of the education jargon that we typically use was not accessible for all families.

They wanted us to express the goals clearly with a breakdown of what each of the goals would look like in action.

We decided to create something collectively from the voices of our staff, parents and students, combining visuals and explanations to make sure that our collaborative goals were clear and accessible for our full school.
To see Thurgood Marshall Lower school in action, please see the video below.

Principal Erin Lynch | Seth Low IS 96

How it Started, How it's Going | Redesigning After School Academic Intervention Services (AIS)!

Our Instructional Leadership Team identified the following problems of practice (Chapter 3: Standing on the Balcony, Chapter 6: Give the work back; Place the work where it belongs):

- There was no clear connection between after school improvement data and core course work improvement data for students chosen for after school AIS support.
- The average daily attendance for AIS after school for school years 18-19 and 19-20 was inconsistent day to day and significantly lower than our regular school day average numbers.

We needed to achieve the outcomes of increasing the daily attendance rate and student engagement of AIS after school, increase targeted students’ core course grades and percentage of standards mastered as a result of attending after school AIS, and change the hearts and minds of all teachers in regard to crafting individualized student support.

After much engagement with all stakeholders, we decided to dedicate one day a week for each subject: ELA/ENL on Monday, Math on Tuesday, Science on Wednesday, and Social Studies on Thursday and have students identified for AIS by their core course teachers using the first two marking period grades.

As a result we are now seeing an increase in passing cumulative average and several students not on the PID list. For numbers and more information, contact Principal Erin Lynch at elynch3@schools.nyc.gov.

Courage in Leadership, Courage for Youth

An Open Letter

Dear Colleagues in Leadership,

Please join me in celebrating our courageous LGBTQ+ leaders and allies, as we spotlight them on our LEAD social media platforms during Pride Month 2021. As an out gay leader in the DOE myself, I want to acknowledge that our community has made many gains in our visibility and in our right to be protected from discrimination at work. There is still more to be done, however, as there are many of us who still live and work in fear of reprisals if we were to come out. Coming out is an act of courage. It lifts the veil of shame
that so many members of our community carry over ourselves from centuries of being subject to discrimination, demonization, and persecution, sometimes even within our own families.

As out school leaders, it is particularly important for us to lift up our identities and live openly to set an example for our many LGBTQ+ youth who suffer disproportionately high school drop-out rates, homelessness, suicide, physical and verbal attacks, emotional abuse, sex trafficking, and murder. As we work to shape the next normal in education, it is imperative that we fully consider LGBTQ+ youth data points so that we can more comprehensively understand how the conditions surrounding their LGBTQ+ identities impact their learning and well-being. Not taking these data points into consideration further exacerbates the marginalization and invisibility, and deprives us all the ability to help our LGBTQ+ youth in meaningful ways that could improve their education and academic outcomes.

I ask all of our leaders, LGBTQ+ and our straight allies, to please join me during this Pride Month, and every month, in creating a culture where LGBTQ+ identities are cherished, so that we can live openly, be counted, and be seen. Doing so benefits us all in creating a world where our differences are not only tolerated but seen as assets to be celebrated. All of our students, most especially our LGBTQ+ youth, are counting on us!

For a better world.

Openly,
Rex Bobbish
Senior Director, School Leadership Development

---

**LEADers on the Move**

The Office of Leadership, Empowerment, and Development (LEAD) is taking a moment to celebrate and offer congratulations to our talented leaders on the move. Please join us in celebrating newly appointed Community School District 8 Superintendent Jennifer Joynt and newly appointed Community School District 31 Superintendent, Dr. Marion Wilson!

![Jennifer Joynt](image1.png)  ![Dr. Marion Wilson](image2.png)

**Congratulations to our newly appointed Superintendents for the 2020-2021 School Year!**

*Please join us in sharing celebratory greetings to our leaders!*
LEADership in Focus

“Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself.” - John Dewey

This quote represents a core belief of the administrative team at Repertory Company High School for Theater Arts, which consists of Principal Mike Fram, LEAP* Class of 2012, Assistant Principal Kayann Dell, also LEAP Class of 2012 and Assistant Principal Keeshon Morrow, LEAP Class of 2017. This dynamic trio credits LEAP with helping to shape their shared vision for “Repertory,” whose mission as an arts high school is “To offer postsecondary access and opportunities for all of our students through a robust performing arts and academic program that emphasizes inclusiveness, creativity, higher-order thinking and self-reflection.”

Principal Fram, who hails from Brookline, MA and has been with the NYC DOE for 14 years, says, “LEAP taught me the uniqueness of my world view and lived experiences, and the danger of becoming myopic. I have become much more in tune to the narratives of my students, families and staff, and that has helped me design a community that is responsive to them, instead of just designing the one I think needs to exist.” He notes that Repertory is the only arts-based school in Manhattan to be part of the Diversity in Admissions Initiative. He remembers being pushed by his LEAP facilitator to attend to the data in his school that demonstrated a need to keep the focus on maintaining the diversity of the school population, and not allowing Repertory to become an “exclusive, exclusionary” institution. Fram set out to ensure that the school “treats students and teachers as artists perfecting a craft, rather than receptacles gathering information.”

He is supported in this work by his two assistant principals. A classmate from LEAP, Assistant Principal Dell, was born in Jamaica, West Indies and raised in Canarsie, Brooklyn. She says that LEAP taught her to be collaborative, and that “you can be a charismatic leader and own your weaknesses so that you can put the right people in place.” Ms. Dell has been with the DOE for 15 years. Keeshon Morrow, born and raised in Piqua, Ohio, has been with the DOE for 11 years. He credits LEAP with showing him “the power of community, and the opportunities that exist to leverage a community for positive change.”

The team agrees that having the shared experience of LEAP is a big part of why their school and their students have been successful. Because of LEAP, “we benefit from having had similar conversations, especially regarding the need to get off the dance floor and onto the balcony.”

We hold each other accountable for remembering to “zoom out” and focus on adaptive change over technical fixes. We don’t agree on everything, but we have the experience of engaging in brave, authentic conversations that keep kids at the center.” Currently, their four-year graduation rate is 93 percent, with a six-month post-secondary enrollment of 94.9 percent.

And of course, in addition to a strong academic program, the incredibly talented students at Repertory participate in truly professional level stage productions, often performed in their “Black Box” theater.

During the pandemic, “Rep” kept students highly connected through virtual performances and engaged the community through social media.

Follow this lively, fun, community-minded school on Instagram and Facebook @repcohsnyc.
What We’re Reading

The Leader as Coach: How to unleash innovation, energy, and commitment

by Herminia Ibarra and Anne Scoular

“Once upon a time, most people began successful careers by developing expertise in a technical, functional, or professional domain. Doing your job well meant having the right answers. If you could prove yourself that way, you’d rise up the ladder and eventually move into people management—at which point you had to ensure that your subordinates had those same answers.” Continue reading here.

Check out previous Tips of the Week here.

Leadership for Liberation: In Recognition of Juneteenth

Brooklyn South Superintendent Michael Prayor and NYC DOE media manager Christian Williams Fernandez are working simultaneously to bring light and attention to a previously eclipsed and significant aspect of American history, Juneteenth. Juneteenth (a combination of the word “June” and “Nineteenth”), also known as “Liberation Day”, commemorates the emancipation of enslaved people on June 19, 1865. Both Prayor and Williams understand the necessity of expanded curriculum and pedagogy, and leadership practices that create opportunities for liberation as well as celebration and acknowledgement of multiple histories. Learning about Juneteenth “is not just important for the children of New York City but the teachers and leaders as well,” shared Prayor. “I have a 7 year-old son,” added Williams, “it is important for me as a father that he understands who he is,” Williams continued. When asked, “Why now?” Superintendent Prayor spoke to the confluence of historical and contemporary events, all inclusive of January 6, the pandemic, and continued targeted violence directed towards communities of African and Asian ancestry. “It just feels like the time is right,” shared Prayor.

Click here for the Juneteenth Microsoft Teams day-long celebration, or see Superintendent Prayor’s district site here for additional details, and follow NYCDOE schools’ social media for Juneteenth interviews with NYC DOE leaders and educators.
Follow NYCLEAD on Social Media:

*Twitter: @DoeLead | LinkedIn: @LEADDOE | Instagram: @leaddoe |

Office of Leadership, Professional Learning, and Continuous Improvement

Rahesha Amon, Senior Executive Director, Office of Leadership, Professional Learning, and Continuous Improvement

Larry Woodbridge, Senior Executive Director, Leadership

Sean Davenport, Ed.D, Senior Lead, Professional Learning

Sharon Rencher, Senior Executive Director, Continuous Improvement

Una-Kariim A. Cross, Editor