



## *The Conference Daily*

Sunday, March 4, 2007

### **Iowa Training Program Seeks Continuous Improvement**



Jay Marino, an associate superintendent in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, co-led a Sunday session on providing support for change.  
Photo by Michael Nissman

In an Iowa district, kindergarteners are making the ground rules. These ground rules govern how students in a classroom will treat each other. They include "be kind," "be respectful" and "be a good listener." School officials in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, believe that when students work as a team to develop classroom rules it fosters a sense of community, helps students internalize them.

According to Cedar Rapids Associate Superintendent Jay Marino, allowing kindergarteners to establish their own rules means they are more likely to follow them. These new rules are one of many initiatives Cedar Rapids Community School District has implemented over the past two years.

Marino and Cedar Rapids Superintendent Dave Markward discussed these initiatives at a Sunday morning session entitled "Providing Support for Change at the District, School and Classroom Levels: Effective Professional Development Practices."

The Iowa district has created what it calls "Strategic Plan on a Page," a tangible document on display in poster size in each one of its 33 school buildings.

"If you want to get everyone on the same page you've got to provide at least that page," said Markward.

The district distilled its strategic plan into a three-and-a-half minute video that is shown to all 2,800 employees. The idea is to get every employee involved. The district supplements the video with professional development on establishing ground rules and the mission statement, goal setting and tools to ensure quality improvement.

Constant feedback is key to improvement, according to Marino. "Nobody escapes continuous improvement," Marino said. This requires school leaders and teachers listen to the "voice of the customer." In his district, the customers include kindergarteners who provide daily feedback on yellow stick-ons.

Marino showcased yellow "stick-ons" written by kindergarteners. These "stick-ons" serve as daily evaluations by the school's "customers" in an attempt to engage feedback at all levels.

To learn more about Cedar Rapids professional development practices, visit the [district's website](#).

-- Michael Nissman

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[Jay Goldman](#), Editor



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