

Instructional Leadership

Quadrant D Leadership Practices



**International Center
for Leadership in Education**

Acknowledgments

The International Center for Leadership in Education wishes to thank
the author of this resource kit:

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Overview

Quadrant D Leadership is the International Center for Leadership in Education's framework for school leaders. It is an effective blending of vision and empowerment, involving an adaptive process by which leaders, staff, and students take action to improve teaching and learning in their school. School leaders can use this model to reflect on daily decision making and problem solving, and move a school toward a goal of rigorous and relevant learning for all students.

Quadrant D Leadership is an outgrowth of the research the International Center has conducted on school leadership through its extensive work with model schools across the country. For the past 19 years, the International Center has identified and analyzed hundreds of the highest performing and fastest improving schools in the country to showcase at the annual Model School Conference. Schools that have made great advances despite limited resources, high poverty, and high student mobility are sought out because they offer the best lessons on the practices to move all students to high levels of learning.

Leadership, however, is key to every school's success. There is not a rigid prescription of practices, skills, or behaviors that will create effective school leadership; rather, it is situational and adaptive. School principals and other administrative leaders must work effectively over time with staff and students to build organizational leadership that reflects high levels of empowerment and vision.

Instructional leadership is also not one specific practice such as classroom walk-throughs or coaching. It is a combination of practices that are used together to improve instruction. Before initiating any practices, leaders need to attend first to the *context* of instructional leadership as defined by school climate, relationships, collaborative structures, and goals and expectations. Second, leaders must define the *target* for instructional change. Instructional improvement cannot be just about getting better. Improvement must have a clear agenda and focus. The lessons from rapidly improving schools provide great examples of what constitutes a powerful agenda for instructional improvement.

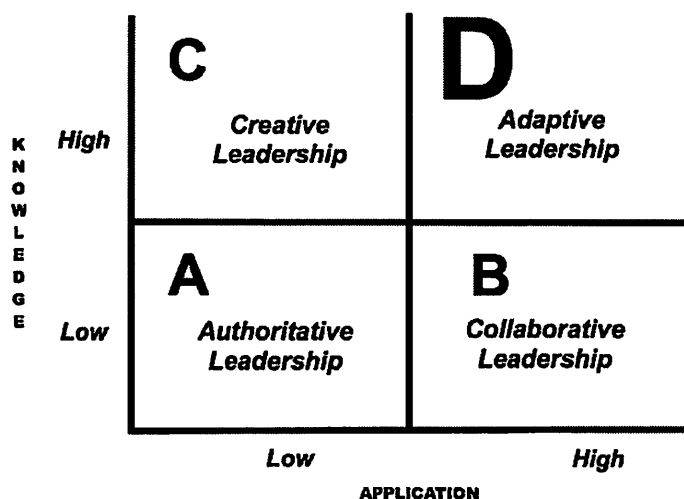
Instructional Leadership — Quadrant D Leadership Practices

The combination of leadership practices that is consistent with the Quadrant D Leadership model are:

- **Management practices:** best implemented with authoritative leadership (Quadrant A)
- **Empowerment practices:** contribute to a more collaborative environment (Quadrant B)
- **Vision practices:** compatible with creative leadership (Quadrant C)
- **Culture practices:** consistent with adaptive leadership, bringing lasting change (Quadrant D)

Effective instructional leadership results from understanding how each of these sets of practices complements the others to move a school toward its goals.

Four Quadrants of Leadership



Following is an overview of each chapter.

Chapter 1: Lessons About Leadership starts the resource kit with a thorough study of current research from the fields of neuroscience and social science, along with a review of historical and contemporary lessons from the business world and observation and analysis of best practices from successful schools. These sources provide valuable insights into the kind of leadership that yields the best results. Good leadership is a process of guiding people to go places that they probably would not have gone on their own. Deliberate changes in people's behavior are difficult to accomplish, and this is the challenge of leadership.

Chapter 2: Quadrant D Leadership lays out an adaptive framework foundation for leadership action that can guide leaders as they develop plans, strategies, practices, systems, and a collaborative and supportive culture that will lead to rapid and sustainable change — change that includes improvements in student performance. Known as the Quadrant D Leadership Framework, it leads to the development of models that leaders can use to apply their talents and experience effectively. The framework guides leaders in their daily actions and encourages them to reflect on the role of school leadership in sustaining school improvement and student achievement. True Quadrant D leaders will move among the skill sets of each of the framework's quadrants in order to meet the demands of running a school, but they do so with an eye toward cultivating leadership density and empowering staff and students to play significant roles in decision making and problem solving.

A three-step process —

1. create a context
(Ch. 4)
2. define a specific target
(Ch. 5)
3. develop an array of
practices (Ch. 6-9) —
frames instructional leadership
planning and action.

Chapter 3: Conversations with Quadrant D Leaders presents excerpts from conversations with successful Quadrant D leaders — real-life examples for aspiring Quadrant D leaders to consider as they learn about the theories and models they can apply to their own efforts. The most frequently asked questions about instructional leadership are posed to eight principals who are some of the best in the field. The schools represented by these principals are outstanding learning communities. The principals would be the first to say that they could not have achieved success alone, but certainly their leadership made a significant difference.

Chapter 4: Creating a Context for Instructional Leadership focuses on *context* or looking at the school environment, particularly the staff, in the way they work together, and what they think about teaching and learning. Addressing instruction requires action over a long period of time, but leaders frequently are called upon to attend to more urgent problems.

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Challenges that require sustained vigilance are considered “adaptive challenges,” while those issues that are resolved through quicker, more definitive action are called “technical challenges.” By better understanding how to address instructional leadership as a unique adaptive problem, school leaders can become more effective in supporting staff to deliver the highest quality instruction.

Chapter 5: Target for Instructional Leadership provides the agenda for making improvements in instruction or the basic list of items on which instructional leadership is focused. Six agenda suggestions are offered to instructional leaders: aligning with priority standards; striving for rigor, relevance, and relationships; using “begin with the end in mind” planning; focusing on literacy; personalizing instruction; and engaging students. These areas encompass broad and powerful aspects of teaching and learning. They apply equally across all grade levels and every subject area. When school leaders focus on these aspects of instructional leadership they can have profound impact on teaching and learning. Leaders can develop deep knowledge in these instructional areas and use them to improve instruction in all subjects and in all grades without having great content knowledge in the subject being taught.

Chapter 6: Management Practices outlines a typically authoritarian approach to management that is considered Quadrant A leadership in the Quadrant D Leadership Framework. Management practices that address basic, common managerial and administrative tasks include: policies and procedures, personnel and budgets, school master schedule/teacher assignments, staff reviews and evaluations, balanced assessments, and student achievement data analysis. These management practices are essential, but they do demand lower levels of leadership.

Chapter 7: Empowerment Practices embodies the leadership practices that are most closely associated with Quadrant B leadership in the Quadrant D Leadership Framework. While these practices support high levels of leadership application and empowerment, leaders who rely predominantly on these are often hindered from advancing into Quadrant D Leadership by the lack of clearly define vision for the school. Empowerment practices include: leadership teams, mentoring, co-teaching and team teaching, teacher incentives and rewards, teacher observations and study tours, and individualized professional learning.

Chapter 8: Vision Practices features Quadrant C leadership in the Quadrant D Leadership Framework. These practices may reflect high

Chapters 6 through 9 focus on the 25 essential instructional practices — organized by the quadrants of the leadership framework — that are associated with effective leadership for sustainable and systemic change.

levels of knowledge of leadership and creativity, but they are weaker in their focus on empowerment. Vision practices include: vision, mission, and goals; instructional technology; the Rigor/Relevance Framework; needs assessment and strategic planning; classroom walk-throughs; and professional development workshops.

Chapter 9: Culture Practices encapsulates the leadership of the practices that comprise all four quadrants of the Quadrant D Leadership Framework in working toward establishing a culture that supports significant and sustainable improvement. Culture practices include: academic intervention, instructional coaching, peer review of student work, grading practices, celebrations, and professional learning communities. The uses of the practices that are associated with Quadrant D reflect high levels of knowledge and the application of leadership.

Chapter 10: Data-Driven Instructional Leadership summarizes some of the most important leadership practices and strategies involved in making instructional improvement a data-driven process. Thoughtful data collection can yield a wealth of useful information to fuel instructional change. Suggestions are offered that can help schools become more effective as they collect and analyze student data. Instructional leaders can also begin to think about data collection by considering the questions they would like to answer about teaching and learning in their school.

Chapter 11: District Role in Instructional Leadership describes functions and initiatives that a school district should undertake to build Quadrant D Leadership for instructional improvement in its schools. When school districts embrace the Quadrant D Leadership model, district leaders gain a clearer vision of what effective leadership looks like. This can guide daily interactions with school staff. In supporting schools, districts using the Quadrant D Leadership philosophy must take responsibility for several important instructional leadership functions. These functions relate primarily to personnel and employee contracts, infrastructure for technology support and student data, curriculum content expertise, and professional development for administrators and staff. A review of the 25 instructional leadership practices with specific suggestions for the important functions that districts must provide to implement and support them effectively completes this resource kit.

The **Appendix** has an overview of the Rigor/Relevance Framework and a list of resources referenced in the kit.

Instructional Leadership — Quadrant D Leadership Practices

A **CD** provides all of the tools presented in the resource kit plus other items that may be useful for handouts, etc.

Four **DVDs** are included for viewing by school leaders and for use in professional development. These presentations were filmed at the International Center's Leadership Academy in January 2010.

Instructional Leadership — Before You Begin

Dr. Richard Jones 50 minutes

School districts play a key role in leading, supporting, and sustaining a model of instructional leadership. Instructional leadership is more than a series of practices such as professional learning community or classroom walk-throughs. This presentation explains how and why schools leaders must address school context and set a target in order to make instructional leadership practices successful.

Powerful Practices for Quadrant D Instructional Leadership

Dr. Richard Jones 50 minutes

This presentation provides an introduction to the Quadrant D Leadership model and how to use this model to evaluate various instructional leadership practices.

Monitoring Instruction Through Formal and Informal Evaluation of Staff

Dr. Susan Szachowicz 55 minutes

One of the most important, but often neglected, leadership practices is the development of meaningful staff reviews and evaluations. This presentation describes how staff evaluations were revised at Brockton High School in Brockton, Mass., to become one of the most useful practices of instructional leadership.

Quadrant D Leadership — A Team Approach to Leading Instruction

Dr. Kathleen Weigel 50 minutes

This presentation explains Quadrant D Leadership from her perspective and provides strategies for building effective leadership teams as a key element in instructional leadership.



Chapter 1

Lessons About Leadership

Reflecting on School Leadership

Leadership is not a rigid list of practices that can be applied with predictable results.

Effective leadership involves recognizing what works, when, and with whom.

The idea that leaders are essential to the quality of schools and school improvement seems obvious, but research about educational leadership is not that clear.

Simply defined, good leadership is a process of guiding people to go places that they probably would not have gone on their own. Leadership is change: change of goals, direction, practice, work, or values. Deliberate changes in people's behavior are difficult to accomplish, and this is the challenge of leadership.

Leadership is not a rigid list of practices that can be applied with predictable results, because any action or decision can elicit very different emotional responses from different individuals. Effective leadership involves recognizing what works, when, and with whom. Successful leaders must understand their own personal strengths and inclinations in order to work with others effectively. For example, good leaders learn to control their emotions and how to use their own behaviors to motivate and inspire passion in others.

The idea that leaders are essential to the quality of schools and school improvement seems obvious, but research about education leadership is not that clear. Ideas about leadership are abundant, but school leaders still seek practical perspectives to guide them through the demands of their challenging jobs. At the same time, schools and districts are seeking definitive guidance about how to identify and support effective leaders.

Discussions and debates about school leadership raise many theoretical questions, such as:

- Are all managers leaders?
- Are leadership skills innate or acquired?
- Which is more effective for leadership development, formal education or on-the-job experience?
- Which is better for school improvement, keeping the same leader or changing leaders?
- Is teacher leadership a nicety or a necessity?

Such questions reflect a common misconception about leadership — that its effectiveness depends solely upon the character, traits, training, skills,

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and behaviors of individual leaders. Superintendents, principals, and teachers all provide leadership, and their individual qualities and skills do influence their effectiveness as leaders, but school leadership must be judged on how well an organization functions.

Individual leadership is like a lighted match. A match needs certain chemicals and friction to ignite the flame. But the flame alone will not accomplish much. The match's effectiveness depends greatly on what happens when the flame is applied. The flame can provide beneficial things, such as heat or a cooking fire, or it can be the source of devastating things, such as forest or building fires. So it is with individual leadership: how it is used in its surroundings is what is most important. Application determines effectiveness.

In recent years, one strand of leadership research, discussion, and policy research has focused on the evolution of the school leader's current roles to (1) build a curriculum around state standards, (2) analyze student achievement data and plan improvement strategies, (3) develop and support teachers in ways that promote student learning, and (4) transform schools into more effective organizations to improve learning for all students. This is a new role for leaders, requiring new skills.

In 1996, the Council of Chief State School Officers led the creation of Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC). These were revised in 2008 and provide a set of common expectations for the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of school leaders, grounded in principles of teaching and learning. More than 40 states have adopted the ISLLC standards (or a slight variation) in their administrative certification program requirements.

Lists such as ISLLC standards help state policy makers and universities develop leadership certification programs, but these lists do not help leaders handle the daily challenges of leading school improvement. While it is necessary to redefine the qualities that school leaders bring to the performance of their job, simply identifying and acquiring skills and knowledge is not sufficient to ensure the transfer of these skills into effective school leadership.

Another strand of research correlates characteristics of school leaders, such as experience, consistent core values, high expectations, communicating a vision, perceived fairness, and trust, with student

*Educational Leadership
Policy Standards: ISLLC
[www.ccsso.org/content/
pdfs/introduction_elp_
isllc2008.pdf](http://www.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/introduction_elp_isllc2008.pdf)*

Marzano, R. J., Waters, T.,
and McNulty, B. A. *School
Leadership that Works:
From Research to Results*

Marzano's 21 Leadership Responsibilities

Affirmation
Change agent
Communication
Contingent rewards
Culture
Discipline
Flexibility
Focus
Ideals/beliefs
Input
Intellectual stimulation
Involvement with curriculum-
instruction-assessment
Knowledge of CIA
Monitor/evaluate
Optimize
Order
Outreach
Relationships
Resources
Situational awareness
Visibility

Perez, Milstein,
Wood, and Jacquez.
*How to Turn a
School Around:
What Principals
Can Do*

These days, school
leaders must embrace
a more complex
leadership role.

achievement. For example, Robert Marzano's meta-research identifies 21 responsibilities that correlate with increasing student achievement. While this list of responsibilities looks appealing, it is lengthy and does not clearly inform school leaders which responsibilities to focus on in dealing with specific problems or overall issues. For example, it does not answer such questions as: Should a school leader use involvement in instruction or teacher input (two different responsibilities) to deal with poor student engagement in the classroom? Also, correlation does not mean causation, and focusing on a long list of responsibilities may not guide leaders through a specific problem or challenge.

Historically, leadership studies have suggested that school leaders have been able to succeed simply by carrying out the directives of central administrators. Some districts still try to succeed this way, developing rigid policies and procedures that they expect school leaders to implement with absolute fidelity. But this dictatorial approach is no longer enough to meet today's education challenges.

These days, school leaders must embrace a more complex leadership role. Since every school is unique, a standardized set of procedures cannot possibly address the needs of all. New challenges crop up every day, each requiring leadership action. If they want their students to succeed and their schools to move forward, school leaders must be able to do more than merely follow a procedure book or apply a general district policy. But, again, what does effective leadership look like, and how can districts find and support leaders who will guide their schools to success?

In recent years, one strand of leadership research, discussion, and policy has focused on identifying a set of common expectations for the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of school leaders. These standards help universities develop leadership certification programs and states set policies, but they are less valuable to educators who are handling the daily work of leadership and school improvement. Translating good leadership theory into effective practice requires more than identifying and acquiring leadership skills and knowledge.

Another branch of research correlates effective school leadership and student achievement with characteristics such as experience, consistent core values, high expectations, a clear vision, perceived fairness, and trust. Because correlation does not imply causation, however, focusing on a long list of responsibilities may not help leaders as they try to address specific problems or challenges.

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The need for leadership is clear, but improving leadership and assisting those who take on leadership roles demands more than prescribing preparation standards or listing job responsibilities. Leadership is the application of specific skills and abilities coupled with insights about organizational dynamics and human behavior. In schools, leaders must have a clear understanding of and passion for student needs and aspirations, and they must be capable of defining and supporting the work required to address those needs.

To accomplish this essential work, leaders need a flexible framework for leadership action, one they can use to attend to daily challenges while keeping the school community moving toward the ambitious goal of improving student achievement. Such a framework should not be a mere list, but a straightforward model that allows leaders to draw upon their talents and experience to lead a school community successfully. It should engage school leaders to evaluate their decisions and work continually as it relates to improving instruction and student learning. The International Center for Leadership in Education's Quadrant D Leadership Framework, which is defined with greater detail in Chapter 2, provides such a practical model for educators.

The leadership framework reflects the latest thinking about what constitutes effective leadership. In particular, research conducted in three fields has provided insight for education leadership: (1) science, especially recent brain research and social scientific observation, (2) business, and (3) education, specifically practices in rapidly improving schools.

Are leaders born or made? Advances in technology and social science research techniques provide evidence that the answer to that age-old question is a little bit of both.

Brains and Behavior

Over the last two decades, neuroscience has provided scientists with tremendous insight about learning and behavior. Imaging and brain wave analysis technologies have revealed extensive data about the actual workings of the living human brain. Advanced computer analyses of brain

Leaders need a flexible framework for leadership action, one they can use to attend to daily challenges while keeping the school community moving toward the ambitious goal of improving student achievement.

Brain and Social Scientific Research

activity have enabled neuroscientists to develop an increasing body of evidence linking the physiology of the brain with the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral mind. This research has helped inform teaching and learning, and it can lead to a better understanding of school leadership practices and how they relate to school change.

Social scientists' observations of human behavior and relationships also have contributed to the study of effective management and leadership. The technological capabilities of neuroscience now make it possible not only to observe human behavior, but also to see which areas of the brain are active while those behaviors are occurring. As this type of research continues to evolve, opportunities to augment the understanding of human behavior and motivation will increase. Such advances will have positive impacts on education and leadership. Already, the traditional understanding of the connections among motivation, action, and relationships is being challenged.

Ringleb, Al and
Rock, David. "The
Emerging Field of
NeuroLeadership"

Neuroleadership is an emerging interdisciplinary field that combines cognitive neuroscience and social science to explore the neurological basis of leadership and management practices. The objective is to improve leadership effectiveness within institutions and organizations by developing a science model for leadership development that takes into account the physiology of the brain and its relationship to the mind.

Neuroscientific research has helped dispel many myths about leadership, including:

"Your vision will
become clear only when
you can look into your
own heart. Who looks
outside, dreams; who
looks inside, awakes."
- Carl Jung

Myth: Adult brains are fully developed and do not change.

Reality: A human brain has plasticity. It is able to create new neural connections throughout an individual's life, allowing a person to learn novel ideas and obtain new knowledge at any age.

Myth: A combination of incentives and threats — so-called carrots and sticks — will change behavior.

Reality: Change efforts based solely on stimuli rarely succeed in creating long-term change. Repeatedly rehearsing a behavior is essential for change to occur.

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Myth: People who respond to proposed changes with great emotion are cognitively weak.

Reality: Change is difficult, because it triggers biological/chemical sensations of discomfort in the brain. Changes in an organization can cause individuals to feel real pain. This physiologically driven emotional response occurs uniquely in humans and is not correlated to cognitive capacity.

Myth: Some people are more suited to the stresses of leadership.

Reality: While the nuances of brain function are unique to each individual, the process is essentially the same across individuals. Rational behavior develops over time through the development of the frontal lobes. A person who demonstrates a strong aptitude for rational thought and emotional control has, through practice, developed the frontal lobes, which dominate the brain's more emotional limbic center.

Social Chemistry

The human brain is a social organ that compels us to seek relationships. Even if we do not say anything, hear anything, or touch another person, when we see or are in the presence of other people, our brains react. Infants exhibit signs of this brain reaction early on, when they respond to their parents' facial expressions or mimic sounds or body movements. These types of brain functions form the foundation of learning.

When we experience positive relationships, our brains produce chemicals that generate pleasurable feelings. When relationships are bad, however, the brain produces different chemicals, and the resulting emotional pain may be experienced as acutely as an actual physical blow. These negative feelings may lead to undesirable behaviors or other unexpected outcomes.

When a school or district makes a decision that will increase class size, reassign teachers to new schools, or impose additional testing on students, teachers often are expected to accept the change without comment or complaint. They may be told that they must comply, because the change is part of the job.

Rock, David.
"Managing with the
Brain in Mind"

But authoritarian edicts elicit feelings of social isolation and a sense of helplessness. These feelings create chemical and emotional responses in the brain. Teachers in these situations may become disenchanted and disengaged. They may feel that their good work is unrecognized or underappreciated. These typical human responses are partially the product of natural reactions in socially driven human brain. The trouble is that these chemical reactions — and the resulting negative feelings — carry over into behavior.

In education, this can result in teachers putting forth minimum effort to meet the requirements of their positions. The feelings may carry over into their language, body language, and actions with others, notably students. In turn, negative brain reactions are triggered in students, degrading their attitudes and efforts.

What may seem like a simple decision or action by a school or district can kick off a downward spiral that translates into an unpleasant environment and poor student achievement.

So what seemed like a simple decision or action by a school or district instead kicks off a downward spiral that translates into an unpleasant environment and poor student achievement. Research shows that what may be equated with poor character or willfulness, however, is actually a natural manifestation of chemical processes in the brain. One person's actions activate chemical reactions in others' brains, which can trigger a range of thoughts and emotions that are controlled by the more emotional part of the brain.

One of a leader's most important tasks is providing feedback and encouragement to those they lead.

The social aspect of the brain explains why people respond so positively to compliments from others. We all crave recognition, some reassurance that we are important. We join groups for the sense of comfort in social situations. We seek nurturing relationships by creating families or by cultivating friendships. Social feedback is an important brain stimulant. Rewards and feedback spark strong positive brain responses. This is why one of a leader's most important tasks is providing feedback and encouragement to those they lead.

Lieberman, Matthew D.
"Social Cognitive
Neuroscience: A Review
of Core Processes"

Some social cognitive neuroscientists argue persuasively that the need to belong is as basic a human need as sleeping, eating, and breathing. Consistent with this viewpoint, academic and business communities acknowledge that the need for employees to work as team players is so strong nowadays that many organizations resist hiring individuals who cannot or do not want to work with others.

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Understanding the neuroscience behind the physiological aspects of leadership helps leaders:

- make decisions and solve problems
- collaborate with and influence others
- cope with stress and pressure
- facilitate change successfully
- work at maximum potential

As researchers discover more about the human brain, it becomes increasingly clear that effective leadership involves a complex interaction of many elements, including brain chemistry and activity, analytical thought, emotional reaction, the power of images and symbols, the strength of perceptions versus reality, an understanding of the power of personal relationships, and the contagion of passion and humor. To be successful, a leader cannot separate the actions from the reactions of the people in an organization.

To be successful, a leader cannot separate the actions from the reactions of the people in an organization.

Effective school leadership must address some conditions that are unique to education, but other types of organizations, particularly successful businesses, offer many leadership lessons.

Lessons from Business

The XYZs of Leadership

In the 1960s, American social psychologist Douglas McGregor proposed that there are two fundamental approaches to managing people in business, what he called Theory X and Theory Y. Theory X reflects an authoritarian management style. Many managers employ this approach — with poor results. Theory X is predicated on these beliefs:

- The average person dislikes work and will avoid it if possible.
- People must be forced — with the threat of punishment — to work toward organizational objectives.
- The average person prefers to be directed, avoids responsibility, is relatively unambitious, and seeks security above all else.

McGregor, Douglas.
*The Human Side
of the Enterprise*

McGregor, Douglas.
“Theory X and Theory Y”

Theory X reflects an authoritarian management style, while Theory Y is characterized by a participative management style.

In contrast, Theory Y is characterized by a participative management style. Enlightened managers tend to use Theory Y, which usually produces better results, encourages stronger performance, and allows people to grow and develop. Theory Y assumes that:

- Effort in work is as natural as it is in leisure.
- People will demonstrate self-control and self-direction in the pursuit of organizational objectives, without external control or the threat of punishment.
- A commitment to objectives is a function of rewards associated with personal achievement.
- People usually accept, and often seek, responsibility.
- The capacity to use a high degree of imagination, ingenuity, and creativity in solving organizational problems is widely, not narrowly, distributed in the population.
- In industry, the intellectual potential of the average person is not used fully.

Although more recent studies challenge their simplicity, Theory X and Theory Y are still among the most frequently used models in human resources management. They endure as basic guidance for leaders who wish to develop a positive management style and leadership techniques.

Ouchi, William G.
Theory Z

One newer philosophy, Theory Z, was developed by William Ouchi, a professor of management at UCLA. Theory Z advocates combining the best elements of Theory Y with those of modern Japanese management, which assumes that workers are loyal to the organization and interested in working in teams. Managers who use a Theory Z style place a great deal of trust in their employees and offer them a large amount of freedom.

Theory Z assumes that workers are motivated and responsible. Theory Z leaders place a great deal of trust in their employees and offer them a large amount of freedom.

While McGregor's theories mainly focus on management and motivation from the managerial and organizational perspectives, Theory Z advocates for greater reliance on the attitudes and responsibilities of workers. Moreover, Theory Z considers the dynamics of work performance and leadership action throughout an organization rather than through the traditional top-down approach.

Authority and Influence

Joseph Rost, professor emeritus of leadership studies at the University of San Diego School of Education, offers one of the best analyses of business leadership and management styles in his book, *Leadership for the Twenty-First Century*. To gain an historical perspective of leadership and management, Rost conducted an extensive literature review, including an analysis of much of the work written between 1930 and 1990.

Rost, Joseph.
*Leadership for the
Twenty-First Century*

Rost's work is important in the field of leadership studies, because it traces the evolution of leadership based upon the social, technological, and economic changes that have occurred in business. The fundamental purposes of business have remained the same; however, the culture and patterns of interactions among individuals within business organizations have changed markedly, reflecting societal changes.

The primary distinction that Rost makes between "management" and "leadership" is that leadership is an influence relationship and management is an authority relationship. The differences between these kinds of relationships have to do with the use of coercion and the directionality of relationships.

Rost concludes that the 20th century was dominated by an "industrial paradigm" that defined leadership as "good management" that is characterized by "an authoritarian relationship between a manager and subordinates." In this model, coercion is used regularly, and subordinates respond to authoritative directives. While there may be some democratic relationships between managers and subordinates, the fundamental relationship is top-down.

Leadership is an
influence relationship.
Management is an
authority relationship.

In contrast, the 21st century has seen the rise of a "post-industrial paradigm" in which leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers in pursuit of mutual purposes. In this model, coercion is rarely used. Leaders use authority to guide rather than to dictate. As a result, leadership is an interactive network of relationships that exists across all levels of an organization, and it is multidirectional: top-down, bottom-up, peer-to-peer.

Rost's Comparison of Management and Leadership	
Leadership	Management
Influence relationship	Authority relationship
Leaders and followers	Managers and subordinates
Multidirectional relationships	Top-down relationships

Lessons from Leaders

Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner, co-authors of the award-winning bestseller *The Leadership Challenge*, provide one of the best current analyses of leadership practices in business. In 2008, they completed the extremely ambitious analysis of 950,000 responses to the Leadership Practices Inventory. The inventory involved 80,000 self-assessments by business leaders, plus 870,000 assessments of those leaders by individuals who know them. Based on the surveys, Kouzes and Posner developed a list of ten top leadership lessons:

Kouzes, James and
Posner, Barry.
The Leadership Challenge

Kouzes, James.
"The Top Ten
Leadership Lessons"

1. **Leadership is everyone's business.** Leadership is not a position but a practice among many people within the organization. Corporate CEOs and military generals embody the stereotypical image of a leader, but leadership is not the sole responsibility of a single person at the top of an organization. Leadership is a series of practices that are accomplished by many people at every level of the organization. In military units, an effective squad leader will challenge a small team to work together to accomplish a mission. Throughout a corporate organization, leadership actions are taken at every level. In customer service, for example, each employee who has direct contact with customers must have the support to take appropriate leadership actions to meet customer needs.
2. **Credibility is the foundation.** One of the most oft-noted characteristics of good leadership is a strong sense of trust in the

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individual who is a leader. A leader's behavior and actions create a sense of credibility, or lack of it, throughout the organization. Followers are more likely to support an individual when they trust that he or she is credible, and they believe in his or her goals, values, and commitment to the organization.

3. **Personal values drive commitment.** People expect leaders to stand up for their beliefs. If a leader is only *talking* about an organization's goals and not demonstrating a commitment to them through his or her actions, then others are less likely to be supportive. Members of an organization identify with leaders who share common values.
4. **You either lead by example or you don't lead at all.** People make judgments about their leaders based on the actions they see. Leaders who do not set a strong positive example or who are not willing to take on the same responsibilities and tasks as others within the organization will be perceived of as weak or false. Effective leaders are good role models.
5. **Looking forward is a leadership prerequisite.** People expect leaders to have a sense of direction and a vision. They want to follow someone toward an optimistic goal and successful outcome. Followers are skeptical of leaders who do not have a strong vision of how to move an organization to a positive future. Strong leaders need to be forward-thinking and confident about what can be accomplished.
6. **It is not just the leader's vision.** In the healthiest organizations, it is not only about the leader having the most powerful and optimistic vision. All members of the organization must embrace and support the vision. The actions of the leader should inspire every member of the organization to see his or her role in the outcome. Effective leaders inspire a shared vision and create a culture in which each individual aspires to a positive vision for success.
7. **Challenge provides the opportunities for greatness.** The best examples of outstanding leadership are forged through successful resolution of a challenge. Great leadership emerges when there are opportunities to work cooperatively to overcome significant challenges.

Ten Top Leadership Lessons

1. Leadership is everyone's business.
2. Credibility is the foundation.
3. Personal values drive commitment.
4. You either lead by example or you don't lead at all.
5. Looking forward is a leadership prerequisite.
6. It is not just the leader's vision.
7. Challenge provides the opportunities for greatness.
8. Leaders are team players.
9. Leadership is a relationship.
10. Caring is the heart of leadership.

“The creation of something new is not accomplished by the intellect but by the play instinct acting from inner necessity. The creative mind plays with the objects it loves.”

- Carl Jung

8. **Leaders are team players.** No leader in history ever accomplished an extraordinary feat alone. A leader is not a leader unless he or she has followers. Leaders must build a sense of trust among members of the organization and show a strong commitment to accomplish the common vision. They must demonstrate their dedication through a willingness to work as hard as everybody else to achieve the goals.
9. **Leadership is a relationship.** Leadership is a connection between those who choose to lead and those who choose to follow. Exemplary leaders spend time building and nurturing relationships based upon mutual respect and caring. This is where emotional intelligence and social intelligence are so critical. The very best leaders know that their job is to make others feel powerful, not simply to acquire power for themselves.
10. **Caring is at the heart of leadership.** The best leaders are not cold and detached from the people who comprise an organization. They constantly think about people and how the organization's activities will affect individuals personally. A sense of caring does not prevent leaders from making difficult decisions, but it helps guide them. Caring is at the heart of building relationships, and relationships are at the heart of strong leadership.

Rapidly Improving Schools

Since its inception, the International Center has worked with or examined the work of thousands of schools in hundreds of districts that have achieved sustainable change. The annual Model Schools Conference and collaboration with the Successful Practices Network — a network for schools to share ideas, feedback, and strategies — have enabled extensive examination of the characteristics of rapidly improving schools. One of the most consistent findings is that strong leadership — leadership that is future-focused, persistent, and distributed throughout the organization — is at the center of successful and sustainable school improvement.

Over the years, various school improvement groups have identified many rapidly improving schools. Typically, each of these schools has been led by a charismatic individual who introduced a vision that raised expectations and who was able to build a consensus of followers willing to take risks. Said leader created or introduced the innovations necessary to achieve the vision. In this model, the leadership of a specific individual

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made the difference, and it is easy to identify the essential leadership characteristics that facilitated the change, such as vision, communication skills, passion, people skills, willingness to take risks, and persistence.

The problem with this model is that it is difficult to sustain improvement when change is based on the leadership qualities and skills of a single individual. Sustaining school leadership is tremendously challenging: even charismatic school leaders move on or retire. Many schools that were exemplars of innovation a decade ago are no longer models.

Much of the existing research about leadership identifies good practices. There is an implication, however, that anything that is not on the so-called master list is a poor practice, one not to be recommended for quality leadership. Such lists are not particularly helpful to leaders, because leadership requires more than the act of carrying out the right practice or avoiding a wrong one. Strategies that work in one situation may not work in another. This is what makes leadership so challenging. There is no instruction manual that details the correct procedure for leading an education institution to success. What worked at one time or in one place may not work in another.

Leaders must adapt to constantly changing conditions. For example, the simple act of assigning a group of teachers to plan a student recognition celebration can have different consequences in different settings. In a school with a highly collaborative staff, for example, the request may be a simple task that requires a committee to meet a few times to get the project rolling. But in a school struggling with contentious contract negotiations, the assignment could be met with protest and grievance.

In rapidly improving schools, there are subtle differences in leadership styles. Certainly each leader in these schools has an impact on the school culture, and the school community would identify the leader's encouragement and support as integral to success. But while some of these leaders seem to possess endless stores of energy and be involved in any and all activities, others serve more as delegators, with assistant principals, team leaders, and school staff assuming greater responsibility in decision making, problem solving, and taking action. Both types of leaders are successful; however, simply trying to replicate either or both styles is less likely to result in long-term and sustainable school improvement.

It is difficult to sustain improvement when change is based on the leadership qualities and skills of a single individual.

"We must become the change we seek in the world."
- Ghandi

It is more telling to look at school performance rather than to look at an individual leader's behavior.

There is a similar phenomenon when attempting to model effective teaching practices. While teachers can model the effective practices of successful teachers, to be truly effective, each individual must develop his or her own unique style. The high degree of individuality is why it is wiser to evaluate a teacher's effectiveness by looking at student engagement and achievement rather than at his or her behavior in front of a class. And so it is for school leadership: to judge the effectiveness of leadership, it is more telling to look at school performance rather than to look at an individual leader's behavior.

Summary

There is a wide ranging collection of definitions, theories, notions, and ideals that attempt to address the question of what makes a leader effective. Many models exist, but few can be applied practically. Education leaders need a framework that can guide them as they develop the plans, practices, and systems that will lead to rapid and sustainable change, including improvements in student performance.

A careful study of current research from the fields of neuroscience and social science, along with a review of historical and contemporary lessons from the business world and observation and analysis of best practices from successful schools, has resulted in valuable insights into the kind of leadership that yields the best results. What has been learned is unique from much of what the existing literature about school leadership describes. The Quadrant D Leadership Framework applies that learning.





Chapter 2

Quadrant D Leadership

Framing the Framework

A mental model enables one to navigate quickly and easily when the required action or decision is clear, or it reveals possible alternatives when there is an obstacle.

“Real understanding requires and leads to a shift in one’s mental model.”

- Renate Nummela Caine

There is no single prescriptive model that will guarantee sound leadership. Therefore, effective school leaders need an adaptable framework for leadership action that can guide problem solving, decision making, and planning. More than a list of good practices, a useful framework helps lay the foundation for leaders to develop mental models that help them apply their talents and experience effectively.

A mental model is like a really good city map city: it enables one to navigate quickly and easily when the way — or required action or decision — is clear, or it reveals possible alternatives when there is an obstacle. Professional development in mental models introduces a framework, provides concrete examples, and encourages patterns of reflective thought and conversations to act consistently.

There are certain assumptions about leadership that define the context for a workable school leadership model, such as:

- Leadership is about relationships.
- Leadership is not just about individuals who fill traditional leadership positions. Leadership in schools should include faculty, staff, and students.
- As leaders learn from their experiences, their leadership capacity continues to grow.
- There is no single or fixed “proper procedure” for performing a leadership task in every situation.
- The environment and circumstances significantly influence leadership action in any given situation.
- Not everyone in a school will automatically work to improve the organization and student learning. It is the responsibility of leadership to always be alert for individuals who will undermine the potential for success.

Defining Quadrant D Leadership

School leadership is not a position but a *disposition* for taking action. When leadership is considered a position, a leader is judged upon the decisions he or she makes. When leadership is considered a disposition, it is judged upon the actions taken in the school community. Effective school leaders broaden the definition of leadership in their schools to include the many staff members and student leaders whose efforts further progress toward a common vision.

Quadrant D Leadership is the collaborative responsibility for taking action to reach future-oriented goals while meeting the intellectual, emotional, and physical needs of each student.

Quadrant D leaders are:

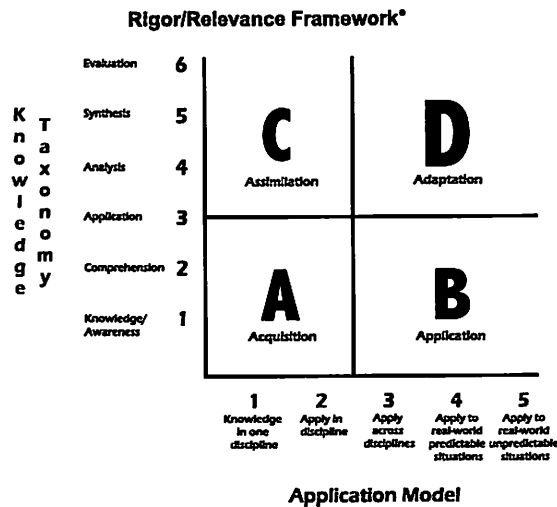
- flexible and able to adapt to the school environment
- able to analyze the leadership characteristics of their school
- knowledgeable about where their school community is and where it needs to move to
- able to develop and articulate a vision about the future needs of students to ensure that all stakeholders are using the same language about leadership in the school
- able to work with people in a manner that ignites their passions, talents, and desires to attain a shared vision

Quadrant D Leadership is the collaborative responsibility for taking action to reach future-oriented goals while meeting the intellectual, emotional, and physical needs of each student.

Quadrant D Leadership Framework

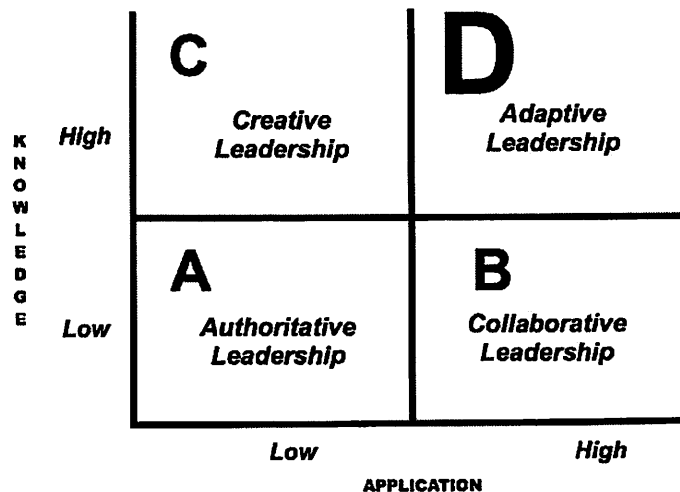
Just as we must prepare students to be 21st century learners, so too, do we need to prepare adults to be 21st century leaders. The International Center's Rigor/Relevance Framework helps teachers quantify the level of their instruction and make progress toward providing students with the highest level of learning, described as Quadrant D.

The Quadrant D Leadership Framework provides context for acquiring and applying the skills, abilities, tools, and processes that leaders can use to create mental models for reflecting on effective leadership practice.



Like its instructional counterpart, the Quadrant D Leadership Framework is divided into four sections, or quadrants. The framework is set along the vertical knowledge continuum and the horizontal application continuum. The level of individual leadership is identified in each quadrant.

Four Quadrants of Leadership



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In the context of the leadership framework, *knowledge* involves raising the level of thinking about what is important in a school. At a low level of knowledge, leaders acquire understanding of school practices and the management of day-to-day tasks. Moving to higher level thinking allows leaders to imagine and anticipate the future: What skills will students need in order to be successful in the future? Are there programs and services that could be added to help students realize their potential? These are the types of reflective questions that leaders ask at high levels of the knowledge continuum in order to create a vision for rigorous and relevant student achievement. Schools reach high levels of leadership when all staff acquire a thorough knowledge of school goals and student aspirations.

“Mistakes are not failure,
mistakes are feedback.”
- Simon T. Fuller

High-knowledge leaders recognize that a current strategy may not be the best or most effective practice. They are willing to take risks and innovate. These leaders keep part of their attention on the distant horizon of sustained long-term improvement and constantly seek creative solutions.

Leadership *application*, the leadership framework’s horizontal continuum, describes the action and style of leadership. At low levels, leaders execute leadership practices singularly, making decisions and solving day-to-day problems on their own. At higher levels, leadership application shifts from the actions of a single leader or small leadership team to leadership that is distributed throughout the school community. Staff, faculty, and students are empowered to participate in leadership and a collective sense of responsibility and ownership emerges.

The skill sets along the knowledge and application continuums can be organized according to the framework’s four quadrants and the corresponding levels of leadership they represent:

- **Quadrant A - Authoritative Leadership** applies to the traditional leadership model in which a leader decides and others act. Those in “managerial” positions, such as principals, assistant principals, and department heads, often are expected to lead in this manner. A leader who is functioning in Quadrant A is usually focused on acquiring the skills and knowledge needed to make decisions independently with respect to school improvement and student achievement.
- **Quadrant B - Collaborative Leadership** involves the application of leadership beyond those in traditional leadership positions to include

staff across all levels of the organization. Decision making occurs throughout the system, so staff have the autonomy to proceed with many activities without having to await direction from an authority. In this model, staff, and ultimately students, work in a highly collaborative environment and take action consistent with school goals.

- **Quadrant C - Creative Leadership** describes higher level thinking in which leaders are more reflective and innovative. They are not limited by past experience and are able to anticipate future needs and seek new solutions. School goals are influenced by current research about proven strategies and practices. Research and reflective thought guide actions.
- **Quadrant D - Adaptive Leadership** is the combination of application and knowledge. At the highest levels of Quadrant D, students are taking a significant leadership role in the school as well as responsibility for their own learning. Leadership in Quadrant D allows a school to change and adapt more easily through staff collaboration. The culture is based on a shared vision and commitment to preparing students for the future.

“Every day an opportunity
for leadership stands before
you.”

- Ron Heifetz and
Marty Linsky

Leadership decisions and actions occur across all quadrants, but the intersection of high levels of knowledge and high levels of application is where Quadrant D Leadership emerges. Ultimately, Quadrant D Leadership is the most desirable and the most reliably associated with effective schools.

Building Toward Quadrant D

Becoming a Quadrant D leader is a process, and operating in Quadrant D not only requires an awareness of how the many components of effective leadership fit together, but also the ability to draw upon the elements comprising each quadrant to deliver the most suitable decision or action. A Quadrant D leader applies different elements of leadership as appropriate. For example, when there are safety or security threats that demand quick, authoritative action, a Quadrant D leader employs a Quadrant A approach.

This is similar to how teachers use the Rigor/Relevance Framework. The instructional goal is to shift toward more teaching into Quadrant D

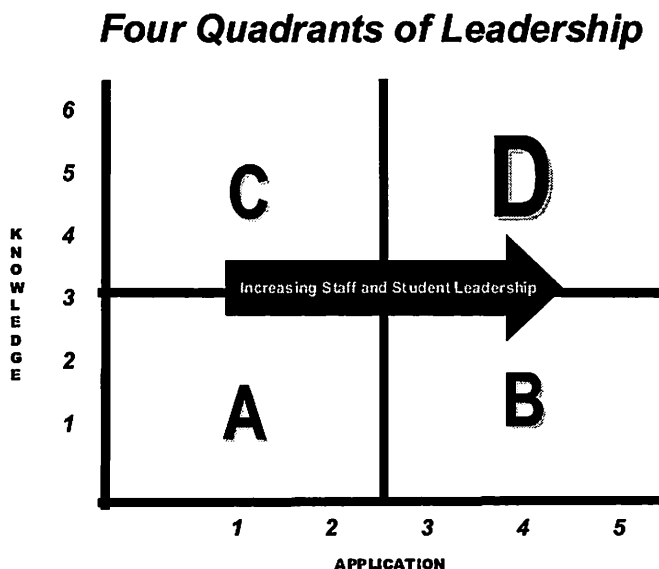
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in order to increase student retention of learning that will transfer to real-world challenges, but teaching in Quadrant A is also important. Likewise for school leaders: a situation may demand that decisions be made in Quadrant A, but the objective should be to move toward Quadrant D's inclusive, flexible style overall.

As a leader shifts to consistent use of a Quadrant D approach, an organizational culture of leadership will begin to emerge. At that point, staff members will be able to understand more clearly the leader's role in decision making as well as their own as part of the leadership structure. Once this culture is established, leaders must be careful to avoid complacency. Sometimes a leader becomes too comfortable with the effectiveness of the organization and slips back into Quadrant A leadership. If the Quadrant D culture has been cultivated well, however, all staff will share in the responsibility of maintaining it.

The shift to Quadrant D Leadership begins when a leader understands the positive impacts that a highly inclusive and collaborative environment can have on student and school performance. To start, leaders should consider the ways in which they can increase the application of leadership

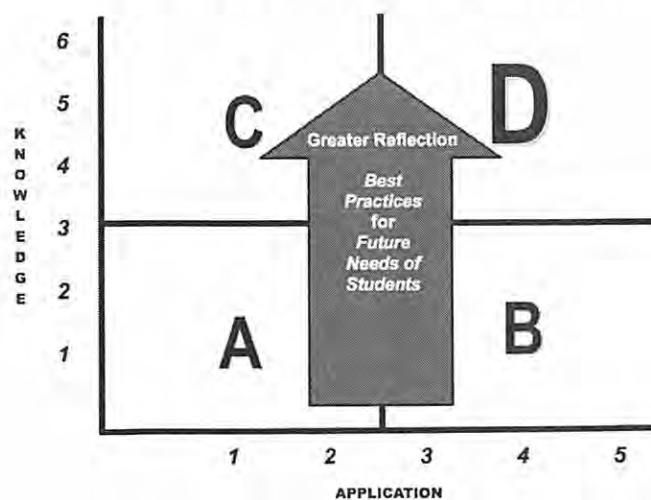
With consistent use of a Quadrant D approach, an organizational culture of leadership will begin to emerge, and staff will be able to understand not only the leader's role but also their own. All staff share in the responsibility of maintaining a well cultivate Quadrant D culture.



across all levels of the organization. On the framework, this is represented by movement from quadrants A and C to quadrants B and D, a shift that is characterized by increasing both staff and student leadership. At the highest levels of leadership, students take significant responsibility for their actions. Practices related to teacher leadership are consistent with moving organizational leadership to quadrants B and D.

Increasing the level of leadership horizontally on the leadership framework is about empowering staff and students to take responsibility and initiate actions. One way to do this is to create specific leadership teams around groups of students or specific school functions, which increases opportunities for both staff and student leadership. For example, many high performing high schools use 9th grade academies to ease the transition to high school and ensure that students are supported for success — through personalized learning, intervention, and other structures — from the start. These academies are managed by leadership teams comprising older students and staff who have responsibility for decision making and problem solving. In other successful schools, data teams analyze, summarize, and present student achievement information to staff to promote data-driven evaluation, monitoring, and planning.

Four Quadrants of Leadership



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These types of team initiatives are very important for increasing leadership density throughout a school community. Simply creating teams is not enough, however. Team-building activities are important, too, and give staff and students a chance to get to know one another, develop a level of trust, and facilitate a team's ability to tackle problems and develop creative solutions.

When a school leader is open to new possibilities, others are empowered to take leadership roles. Even with extensive knowledge and experience of his or her own, a leader will be most effective when he or she consistently and publicly encourages new ideas, listens to them carefully, and evaluates their potential effectiveness. Good leaders reflect on their own behavior to be certain that their language or actions do not discourage new suggestions and possibilities from being shared. When changes are successful, they are quick to credit others for the success and avoid taking credit for themselves. As they work to increase empowerment of leadership, they look for opportunities to involve students and listen to their input regarding school practices.

When a school leader is open to new possibilities, others are empowered to take leadership roles.

The shift from quadrants A and B to quadrants C and D on the framework — movement vertically along the knowledge continuum — is characterized by the shift in thinking that guides leadership action. Leadership is not guided simply by past practices and traditions. Decisions and actions are based on reflective thought, which includes paying attention to students' future education needs so they can succeed in a complex and rapidly changing world.

When schools defend the status quo or are complacent about current results, organizational leadership is operating at levels A and B. When organizations are dissatisfied with current student achievement, passionately pursue higher expectations for all students, and implement creative solutions, they are more likely functioning in quadrants C and D.

Raising student expectations and communicating those expectations to all students raises the level of leadership. When a school commits to a focus on rigor and relevance for all students and uses the Rigor/Relevance Framework extensively, expectations rise. Leaders can also raise staff expectations by becoming more data-driven in their decision making. Sharing student achievement results, creating and collecting more and other types of data about student progress, and analyzing and sharing data raises the knowledge level of school leaders and the quality of leadership.

The International Center has resource kits to address each dimension of the Learning Criteria to Support 21st Century Learners.

Successful schools rely on more than just test scores for their decision making. The International Center's Learning Criteria to Support 21st Century Learners encourages schools to broaden their definitions of what can and should be measured when evaluating the quality of the student learning experiences. The Learning Criteria's four dimensions — Foundation Learning, Stretch Learning, Learner Engagement, and Personal Skill Development — help schools collect and consider more comprehensive data. When multiple measures of student success are considered, staff develop a broader perspective and expectations rise.

A focus on nurturing the whole student — including aspects of nutrition, health, and emotional well-being that help create a strong foundation for lifelong learning and healthy living — also increases expectations. While they are not the primary purposes of public education, these factors must be woven into the fabric of academic success for every student. The added sense of responsibility raises the level of leadership for students and staff alike. It also contributes to a future-focused approach to education.

Concentrating on students' future needs is a way to raise the level of leadership.

Concentrating on students' future needs is a way to raise the level of leadership. Rather than concentrating instructional improvement efforts on fixing things that are not working or that do not meet expectations, leaders across the organization can focus on setting actions that the school community can take to poise students for success in all aspects of their lives, not just academics.

Applying the Leadership Framework

There will always be situations that are handled most appropriately and effectively in one quadrant or another. For sustained, long-term improvements to take hold, however, leadership must aspire to Quadrant D. Over time, the more leadership moves toward Quadrant D, the more a school can adapt to changing conditions and achieve and sustain improvement.

Leading in Different Quadrants

When leadership is based in one quadrant area, it creates certain characteristics in a school. Leadership in each quadrant exhibits its own unique attributes, although there are similarities and some overlap among

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the styles. Quadrant D Leadership draws from elements of each of the other quadrants.

The most startling contrast in leadership styles is between Quadrant A and Quadrant D, as shown in the following table. Leadership in quadrants B and C fall along a continuum between these two styles.

Comparing Traditional School Leaders (Quadrant A) and Adaptive School Leaders (Quadrant D)	
Quadrant A	Quadrant D
Manage the current system	Change the system, as appropriate
Use past experience to solve problems	Learn new ways to adapt and change
Promote standards and procedures	Adapt to unique situations
Replicate practices with fidelity	Create new practices to meet needs
Maintain traditional leadership structure	Cultivate leadership density
Look to superiors for answers	Look to staff to take actions
Rely on expertise	Rely on each other
Change is tied to an individual leader	Change is sustainable because of leadership density

Quadrant A Leaders

Quadrant A leaders tend to focus on implementing — and ensuring compliance with — established routines and procedures rather than on changing or modifying existing structures. Under this managerial style, there is a traditional chain of command, and the leader is the primary decision maker in the school. While following standard procedures may work well for a safety issue, such as a fire drill, such an approach may be less effective in increasing student engagement and encouraging students to enroll in advanced courses.

Quadrant A leaders tend to focus on ensuring compliance with established routines and procedures. These leaders run their schools from the top of a traditional chain of command.

Traditional leaders tend to use past experiences when solving problems. When confronted with an issue, they draw on their past experience extensively, usually with great confidence about their problem-solving expertise. Whenever a new program is implemented, these leaders focus on ensuring that staff replicate practices with fidelity. As issues or problems that appear too difficult, complex, or risky to solve on their own arise, traditional leaders tend to look to superiors for answers and guidance. While there may be some success associated with this leadership style, usually it is not associated with the highest quality education experience for students, and it is rarely sustainable.

“A highly effective school leader can have a dramatic influence on the overall academic achievement of students.”

- Michael Fullan

A good example of Quadrant A leadership was evident in a large suburban high school, which based on quantitative data, was perceived to be successful. Students met state test requirements and most went on to college. There were few discipline problems and the community was proud of the school. But there was more to the story. Students did the minimum they needed to do and could not wait to graduate. Most students who went on to college needed remediation, and many dropped out, because they showed little commitment to the importance of lifelong learning. Likewise, teachers did only the minimum required of them, left at the contractual end of the day, and frequently complained about problems that the administration needed to fix.

Leadership in this school was based on a single individual who focused on keeping things running smoothly within the rules. In fact, the school was rules driven. The principal confused rule compliance with a culture of engagement and passion for learning. While student achievement was perceived of as good, it was barely meeting minimums. There was little capacity for the school to improve. The school was fortunate to have a primarily wealthy student population. If confronted with the demographic diversity that exists in most schools, it is unlikely that this school would have been able to coast on the marginal results, and it would not have had the ability to respond to the changing environment to achieve bona fide success.

Quadrant C Leaders

Leaders who operate in Quadrant C are similar to Quadrant A leaders in that both styles generally are based upon the single-leader model. Yet unlike a Quadrant A leader, a Quadrant C leader tends to understand the contemporary challenges facing education and seeks to make significant

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changes. Quadrant C leaders might be labeled “visionaries.” They seek to innovate, primarily through the power of their personalities.

An example of this type of leadership was observed in an urban high school that was struggling with discipline problems, poor attendance, high dropout rates, and isolated instruction. The principal embraced the model of small learning communities (SLCs) and introduced the structure to the school. The SLCs consisted of six themed academies. Teachers from each discipline were grouped together and assigned to different areas of the building to create the academies. The academies were supported by community and business partners, as well as university partners that provided instructional improvement coaching. The creative principal often was hard at work outside the school nurturing these partnerships.

The change yielded some success, but it was not schoolwide. Only some of the staff bought into the SLC philosophy. Those who did worked together and created islands of innovation in the school. Others continued to follow traditional approaches, functioning as SLCs in name only. Eventually, the leader left the school. The momentum for school improvement slipped, because the creative leader was no longer there. This is the characteristic of schools that have leadership primarily in Quadrant C. Success is partial and varied, because it is tied to the presence of the individual leader.

Quadrant B Leaders

A Quadrant B leader cultivates leadership capacity throughout the school community. The result is an environment that is described as “collaborative,” because of the leadership density. In this model, the “top” individual leader serves to support the leadership of many others.

One large, rural comprehensive high school exhibited the characteristics typical of Quadrant B leadership. Many students in this school lived in poverty, and their parents’ education level was generally low. The school benefited from state redistribution of funds and had a higher level of funding than the local community could provide. There was a focus on high expectations for students, which was manifest in several areas of the school. The career and technical programs were exceptional, with nearly all students completing programs. Students were extensively involved in internships in a nearby resort community. There was an excellent music program in a brand new facility. There were many Advanced Placement

A Quadrant C leader tends to understand the contemporary challenges facing education and seeks to make significant changes, but success may be varied and difficult to sustain, because it centers on the individual leader.

A Quadrant B leader cultivates a collaborative environment with leadership capacity across all levels, but may neglect opportunities to reach outside of the school for new ideas and best practices that will support sustainable improvement.

and dual-credit courses. An outstanding guidance department used volunteers to assist students in college applications and financial aid.

The school's apparent success largely was due to good leadership density, especially compared to what is found in many rural schools. Several departments had very strong leaders. But improvement efforts were not schoolwide. The school community was not united with a common vision. Despite many examples of success, the school had not attained a path to significant, sustained school improvement. The current leader was predominately operating in Quadrant B. Typical of this style, the leadership focus in the school was mainly internal. The principal did not reach outside of the school for new ideas and best practices to improve instruction. There was a general satisfaction with the status quo — each department functioned well independently — so there were few attempts to create a cohesive vision toward which all staff and students could take responsibility.

Quadrant D Leaders

Quadrant D leaders are always seeking ways to change and improve the system. They are quicker to recognize areas in which the current system limits the potential for student success and are open to considering ways to revise the system to meet student needs more effectively. Constantly looking for new ways to adapt and change, Quadrant D leaders are able to break away from established procedures and routines.

Quadrant D leaders seek ways to change and improve the system. They are quick to recognize areas where there is greater potential to support student success, and they strive to create the systems to ensure that school community realizes that potential.

Quadrant D leaders promote a highly collaborative culture that places a greater premium on teamwork than on individual expertise or past experience. When Quadrant D leaders are confronted with a significant challenge or issue, they primarily look to staff to develop effective solutions. The school culture is focused on meeting individual students' needs and celebrating the unique characteristics of the school community. Staff are encouraged to adapt to unique situations and to be flexible in order to support the personal and academic growth of each and every student. A school under Quadrant D Leadership is adaptive and is either on a clear path toward rapid improvement or is positioned to sustain improvement.

A.J. Moore Academy, in Waco, Texas, is one model school that showcases Quadrant D leadership. In the late 1990s, the school was a struggling alternative/career center in the Waco Independent School District. Under

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the leadership of the principal, leadership team, and business partners, the school has transformed itself into a nationally recognized model career academy high school. A culture of high expectations and high levels of support is clearly evident the moment one enters the school. A.J. Moore appears to be more of an adult work environment than a typical school. The school has accomplished this with a socioeconomically disadvantaged and racially diverse student population.

The school kicked off its transition by adopting a clear vision for preparing students for careers and continuing education. Staff were recruited into ambitious and hardworking teams, which created an innovative curriculum and accomplished the instructional planning necessary to achieve the vision. A.J. Moore demonstrates that there is no shortcut to success. Success takes hard work, but teamwork makes the work feel less burdensome. The school embraces the idea that success is not a destination, but a journey. Staff and students give a great deal of credit to their very dynamic principal, but leadership in this school does not reside in her solely. Every day, teachers and students act in ways that support the school's mission.

One specific example of Quadrant D Leadership at A.J. Moore occurred a few years ago, when several communities around the nation were staging demonstrations about immigration issues. Rumors emerged that there would be a sizeable demonstration in Waco. A couple of staff members recognized this as a learning opportunity and crafted a lesson that addressed immigration, civil disobedience, and ways to influence government leaders. The staff did not go to the principal and say, "Here is a problem, do something!" They identified the issue, saw its potential, and forged a solution. They taught the lesson the day before the local event. On the day of the demonstration, while no A.J. Moore students skipped school, other schools in the district were scrambling to decide how to punish the large number of students who had cut classes to attend the rally. In this incident, A.J. Moore staff and students exhibited the characteristics of Quadrant D Leadership. They worked together toward the common vision of connecting learning to the real-world in a manner that made sense for the school community.

A.B. Combs Leadership Magnet Elementary School in Raleigh, North Carolina, is another good example of a school shaped by Quadrant D Leadership. In 1999, this highly diverse school was one of the lowest performing schools in the Wake County Schools district. The staff

The principal of
A.B. Combs, Muriel
Summers, contributed
to Chapter 3.

did not feel good about their teaching, and student performance was not satisfactory. School staff felt that the district leadership had no understanding of the challenges of working with a very diverse student population. Then the school was issued an ultimatum by the district: improve or close. The school responded to the challenge by inventing and implementing a learning model that was different than that of any other school in the nation. This successful learning model was designed to require no additional money or staff. The process that unfolded is an elegant study in Quadrant D Leadership.

Under the outstanding leadership of the principal, the school adopted a vision based on the leadership principles of Steven Covey, whose model for personal responsibility as a means of achieving success was the focus of the bestselling book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Using a collaborative style, the principal empowered staff to create rigorous and relevant learning experiences to engage students and make learning meaningful. With no script to follow, staff created innovative, effective instructional strategies. Although they did not ignore test scores, high performance on state tests was not the goal. Rather, the school leadership team kept a diligent focus on student data to measure the school's progress.

Schools that aspire to function at the highest level of leadership need to involve students in taking active responsibility for their own behaviors and learning.

Leadership in Quadrant D nurtures the connection between student leadership and staff leadership. Schools that aspire to function at the highest level of leadership need to involve students in taking active responsibility for their own behaviors and learning. A.B. Combs has accomplished that with its elementary students, who show outstanding confidence and maturity as a result of the school's culture and practices. The school continues to be highly collaborative and high-performing. A visitor needs only to be greeted by one of the confident, smiling 2nd graders upon entering the school or to sit in the pep-rally type morning staff meeting to affirm the unique leadership environment. In addition to being a regular at the International Center's annual Model Schools Conference, A.B. Combs is featured prominently in Covey's book, *The Leader in Me*.

Situational Leadership

Quadrant D Leadership is the aspiration, but in reality, leaders frequently shift among the skills characteristic of each. It is the balance among the three quadrants that leads to Quadrant D Leadership. Aspiring Quadrant

Instructional Leadership — Quadrant D Leadership Practices

D leaders should constantly reflect on practice and ask themselves if there are opportunities to raise the level of leadership toward Quadrant D when working in the other quadrants.

Quadrant A Leadership Situations

As discussed, there are many school situations in which the managerial style typical of Quadrant A Leadership is warranted, such as:

- addressing student safety and security issues
- ensuring that staff follow standard procedures consistently
- ensuring compliance with ethical and legal requirements
- dealing with significant student behavior disruptions
- introducing new state mandates
- maintaining fiscal controls
- handling school maintenance issues
- dismissing a staff member

Using Quadrant A leadership is appropriate for many situations, such as for addressing student safety or security issues.

Quadrant B Leadership Situations

In Quadrant B, the emphasis is on building a collaborative school community. One critical circumstance that requires the application of Quadrant B skills is low staff moral as a result of recent layoffs or fiscal cuts. At such times, staff need to have strong collaborative support. Many other key situations require building collaborative leadership, the hallmark of a Quadrant B approach, among them:

- hiring staff and establishing mentoring responsibilities for experienced staff to work with new staff
- developing strategies for addressing significant demographic changes within the school community
- considering the implementation of a new program, such as a different reading series or other curriculum item
- easing transitions in the school community when there are many new staff in leadership positions, such as principals or assistant principals

One critical circumstance that requires the application of Quadrant B skills is low staff moral as a result of recent layoffs or fiscal cuts.

Quadrant C Leadership Situations

Quadrant C Leadership can help school address issues of poor overall student achievement.

A school must establish a vision in which all students are supported to achieve their highest potential. The time is ripe for the more visionary approach of Quadrant C leadership when:

- student achievement is poor overall
- gaps in achievement among different groups of students call for a deep focus on data and lofty goal setting
- staff must be encouraged to move beyond the status quo of traditional instruction
- expectations for students are too low or are not clearly articulated and supported

Quadrant D Leadership Situations

Quadrant D Leadership is the best approach when a *good* school wants to become a *great* school.

Anytime is the right time for Quadrant D Leadership. If a school is working very well but wishes to move to an even higher level of student performance, one that is based on a broader range of measures, then a Quadrant D Leadership approach is critical. For a school that is mired in routine but looking for an innovative approach to address recommendations from the leadership team or district, Quadrant D Leadership may inspire a breakthrough. When a district is creating a brand new school or planning to take a large school and break it into small learning communities, it is appropriate to strive toward Quadrant D Leadership.

“No pessimist ever discovered the secrets of the stars, or sailed to an uncharted land, or opened a new doorway for the human spirit.”

-Helen Keller

In any situation, there are steps along the way that require the leadership approaches characteristic of the other quadrants. A Quadrant D approach demands creation of a clear vision, consensus building around the vision, and development of the structures to support collaborative leadership across all levels. Quadrant D is especially important when:

- a *good* school is striving to become a *great* school
- an innovative approach is required to move beyond the status quo
- there are “islands” of innovation and excellence — particularly strong individual teachers or groups of teachers at a grade level or in a department or program — that must be united to create a cohesive culture

Instructional Leadership — Quadrant D Leadership Practices

- a school wants to sustain successful school improvement efforts
- there is evidence of low student engagement
- there is a shortage of prospective Quadrant D leaders within existing leadership or staff
- a school is experiencing a transition — or a series of transitions — to new leadership
- a district is planning for a new school or for a reorganization of existing schools into smaller learning communities

Superficial Versus Genuine Quadrant D Leaders

A genuine Quadrant D leader understands that different situations will call for different strategies, including authoritarian ones, and is able to move among the leadership strategies easily. For this leader, however, an authoritarian style is a temporary detour.

Sometimes a leader may seem to embrace Quadrant D Leadership, but his or her actions are consistently in Quadrant A, betraying the belief that authoritarian management is the best strategy for running a school. Because he or she may talk a great deal about the ideals that true Quadrant D leaders exhibit, spotting a “covert” Quadrant A leader may be difficult. Certain behaviors, however, are common among these types of leaders. A clandestine Quadrant A leader:

- **Speaks first, speaks loudly, and speaks long.** When it is time to discuss issues, share perspectives, or brainstorm solutions, the covert Quadrant A leader gets his or her perspective and the rationale for supporting it out quickly. The leader's intention is to squelch other perspectives. It takes courage to stake oneself out against one's superior, so staff members may stifle their own ideas. The danger to the organization is clear: valuable insights and potential solutions may never surface.
- **Takes for granted that everyone knows what they need to know.** Some people may be invited to assist in key decision making, planning, and problem solving even if they do not possess the expertise necessary to participate meaningfully in these practices. This can result in poor decision making and frustration on the part of participants, which is then used to justify the authoritarian leader's

A genuine Quadrant D leader strives to *lead* a school. A covert Quadrant A leader may pay lip service to leadership, but his or her actions reveal a desire to *run* a school using a traditional authoritarian approach.

“Be, know, do”
- West Point
Leadership Motto

suppositions that collaborative decisions are inferior. The thoughtful school leader takes time to build capacity among those who are asked to participate in these important activities.

- **Behaves as though empowerment is primarily about making his or her own life easier.** In this case, the work that the administrator “shares” is really intended to reduce the “administrivia” — essential but often tedious tasks involved in running an organization — which he or she must contend. There is nothing inherently wrong with such assignments unless these are the only tasks the administrator shares. If the knotty problems and the global issues confronting the district remain the exclusive purview of the nominal leaders, the group’s creative energy and ideas are not engaged.
- **Provides inadequate time and resources.** The covert Quadrant A leader can make a show of inclusiveness by identifying stakeholders as part of strategic decision making and planning. But if the plans are not supported with the time and resources to accomplish such tasks, it is unlikely that meaningful, high-quality solutions will result.
- **Conducts bad meetings.** Few things diminish the drive and willingness of teachers and community members to solve difficult problems more than poorly run meetings. The covert Quadrant A leader knows this and can avoid the messy interference of outside contributions by not providing adequate materials, sufficient documentation, or needed data and literature. Other autocratic maneuvers include the failure to use proven approaches such as timed agenda items, best practices for decision making, and strategies for defining next steps effectively.
- **Changes the rules late in the game.** When an administrator engages his or her colleagues without clarifying the task or revealing constraints on the group’s decision-making authority, trouble ensues. When participants are not informed about parameters that will undo hard work already completed or negate decisions already made, they will be wary the next time they are approached to engage in problem solving.
- **Uses policies, rules, and laws as camouflage.** The leader who unnecessarily raises the specter of regulatory constraints to maintain exclusive decision making or other authority may be masking a

Instructional Leadership — Quadrant D Leadership Practices

Quadrant A disposition. Consider a superintendent who justifies excluding teachers and parents from having a role in selecting new principals by citing a legal requirement for recommendations for principal hires to come to the board from the superintendent. While rules about a final recommendation may be specific, they do not prevent others from participating in activities leading up to the recommendation, such as applicant screening, participation in interviews, or providing other feedback. This type of action is more about a leader being unwilling to relinquish any power than it is about a leader prudently adhering to the law.

- **Keeps it in “the club.”** This is a situation where a leader seems to be supporting leadership across many levels of the organization, but key assignments are always given to those who hold traditional leadership titles and roles, such as the principal, assistant principal, superintendent, or board members. These are the people who are assigned to task forces and to head various school organizations. There are good reasons to choose capable individuals consistently, but for some leaders, this is a strategy intended to stifle dissent and create comfortable pathways for traditional managerial action. It is easier to predict the course of action, decisions, and loyalty of “club” members, but this strategy hinders a school from building the capacity of other potential leaders and the benefits of divergent thinking are lost.
- **Says “I told you so!”** The covert Quadrant A leader may give lip service to inclusive leadership but is frequently searching for vindication to show how such governance is flawed. Failures, or just missteps, by a group to whom a decision has been delegated are used as proof of this. It is normal for groups working on solutions to big challenges and novel problems to experience some setbacks. A covert authoritarian will use early stumbling blocks as evidence rather than as opportunities. He or she may lay the blame on participants or democratic leadership practices — and self-righteously pull back authority.
- **Takes credit for others' hard work and success.** School victories are often hard-won, especially when there are monumental challenges to conquer. Few things send a more resounding message of covert Quadrant A leadership than a leader taking credit for

Ward, Mike and
MacPhail-Wilcox,
Betty. “About the
Covert Autocrat”

successes without acknowledging the hard work and contributions others have made.

Using Quadrant D Leadership

“Leadership without mutual trust is a contradiction in terms.”

- Warren Bennis

Leaders can use the Quadrant D Leadership Framework to shape their leadership actions. For example, consider a leader who is confronted by the release of test data that reveals that an unacceptable number of students are not meeting state benchmarks in reading comprehension. There are several ways this leader could handle this information to begin influencing school improvement.

One way would be to act as a Quadrant A leader and take action unilaterally. A Quadrant A leader would announce the results to staff and tell them that the required amount of instructional time devoted to reading will be increased — effective immediately! Teachers might be required to participate in a workshop focused on incorporating reading in the content areas.

A Quadrant B leader would not rely on unilateral decisions, but would involve a staff committee, perhaps including students at the high school level, to explore options for increasing reading instruction and support. In a school led by a Quadrant C leader, staff members would feel empowered to seek out research-based best practices for improving literacy and to bring them forth as new ways to tackle the reading comprehension problem.

While the actions of the quadrant A, B, and C leaders would have some impacts on increasing reading scores, actions at higher levels of leadership would be more likely to create innovative solutions, to result in practices that can be sustained over time, and to elicit fewer negative emotions among staff. In a Quadrant D setting, however, the leader already would have established collaborative structures to support staff in creative problem solving. Staff would be empowered to connect the need to increase reading comprehension to other initiatives and establish an expectation for improved reading comprehension. These broader efforts would focus on more than just an increase in state test scores, and support an overall set of expectations to prepare students for the future.

Understanding the Quadrant D Leadership Framework gives schools leaders a mental model for attacking the adaptive challenges of instructional leadership. Instructional leadership involves developing a common vision of good instruction; building relationships; and empowering staff to innovate in instruction, give one another feedback, and share best practices.

This kit is organized around three aspects of instructional leadership: context, target, and practices.

Context

Discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4, *context* describes the work to build the elements of a strong collaborative school community that is eager to innovate and share. These practices are similar to the strategies to move to the quadrants B and D side of the leadership framework.

Context skills involve:

- analyzing data about student achievement and school culture
- reflecting about school practices that influence school culture and relationships
- applying strategies that promote innovation and change in the school culture
- developing the perseverance to overcome obstacles and challenges
- identifying supportive behaviors that build positive relationships
- becoming familiar with a broad range of effective strategies and organizing them into a pyramid of intervention for addressing the needs of every student
- understanding the need to develop a positive school culture so that learning opportunities, both in and out of school, are available to all students
- developing data systems to monitor student reading progress
- reviewing curriculum and research data to identify high-priority standards and benchmarks for the state

Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership involves developing a common vision of good instruction, building relationships, and empowering staff to innovate.

A detailed discussion about target is in Chapter 5.

Target

Target is about setting the strong vision of instructional leadership and building agreement among school community members about the specific aim and purpose of instructional improvement efforts. Focusing on “increasing student achievement” is a measurement of results but not an appropriate target for instructional leadership, because it does not inform teachers how to adjust their instructional practices. Chapter 5 presents a detailed discussion about target. Target focuses on:

- identifying a specific objective for instructional improvement initiatives rather than simply embracing a broad objective to improve instruction
- aligning all instructional practices with the agreed-upon target
- recognizing that having a target is more important than what the target is
- realizing that it is easier to “get all staff on board” when you introduce the target before introducing a practice, such as professional learning communities or classroom walk-throughs
- creating multiple professional learning activities aligned with the target
- selecting among several optional targets that have been successful in rapidly improving schools in increasing student achievement

Practices

Practices are the total of programs, activities, and strategies that leaders use to influence instruction. Practices are only effective if leaders address the context and have a clear target. Good practices help leaders:

- get the right teachers in the right places
- foster development of teacher leadership
- ensure that leaders across all levels are focusing on instructional leadership
- develop and use effective classroom walk-through procedures

Instructional Leadership — Quadrant D Leadership Practices

- select questions and activities that stimulate teacher reflection on instructional practice
- make difficult decisions about staff
- develop teachers into effective instructors through ongoing professional learning
- reflect about current conditions and practices of professional learning
- create and implement coaching and mentoring practices
- evaluate the effectiveness of professional learning

The 25 Major Practices

There is no single approach to improving instruction, but there are 25 major practices that are identified as contributing to instructional leadership:

1. Academic intervention
2. Balanced assessments
3. Celebrations
4. Classroom walk-throughs
5. Co-teaching/team teaching
6. Grading
7. Individualized professional learning
8. Instructional coaching
9. Instructional technology
10. Leadership teams
11. Mentoring
12. Needs assessment/strategic planning
13. Peer review of student work
14. Personnel and budgets
15. Policies and procedures
16. Professional development workshops
17. Professional learning community
18. Rigor/Relevance Framework
19. Master schedule/teacher assignments

This resource kit includes a DVD related to this topic: *Powerful Practices for Quadrant D Instructional Leadership*.

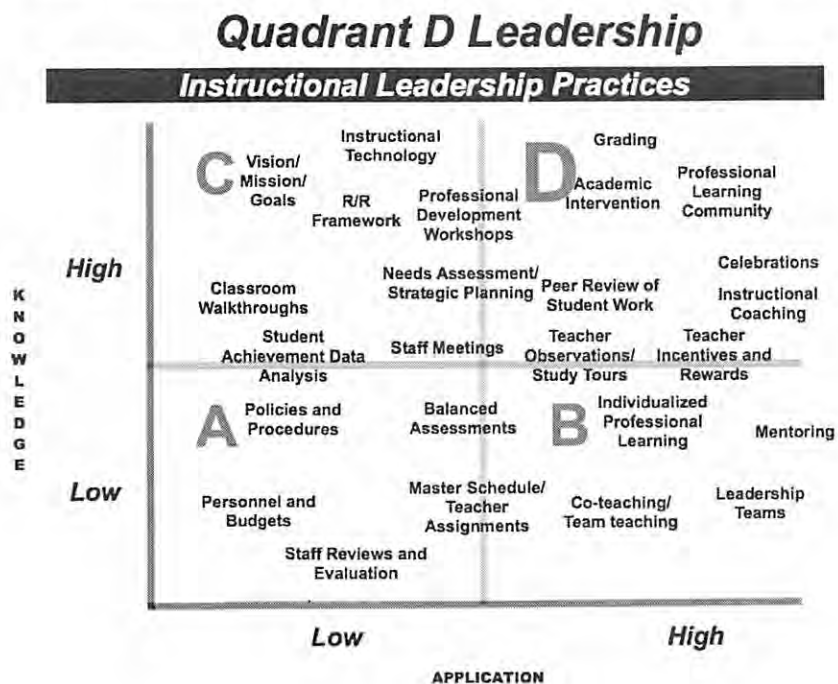
Tools for each of these 25 practices can be found in Chapter 6 through Chapter 9.

20. Staff meetings
21. Staff reviews and evaluations
22. Student achievement data analysis
23. Teacher incentives and rewards
24. Teacher observations/study tours
25. Vision/mission/goals

These practices can be grouped into four areas — (1) management, (2) empowerment, (3) vision, and (4) culture — which are described briefly in the following sections and in greater detail in Chapters 6 through 9.

Leaders will use many of the 25 practices depending on particular circumstances. All of the practices are aligned with the mental model of the Quadrant D Leadership Framework, which guides leadership in deciding which processes will work best in a given situation.

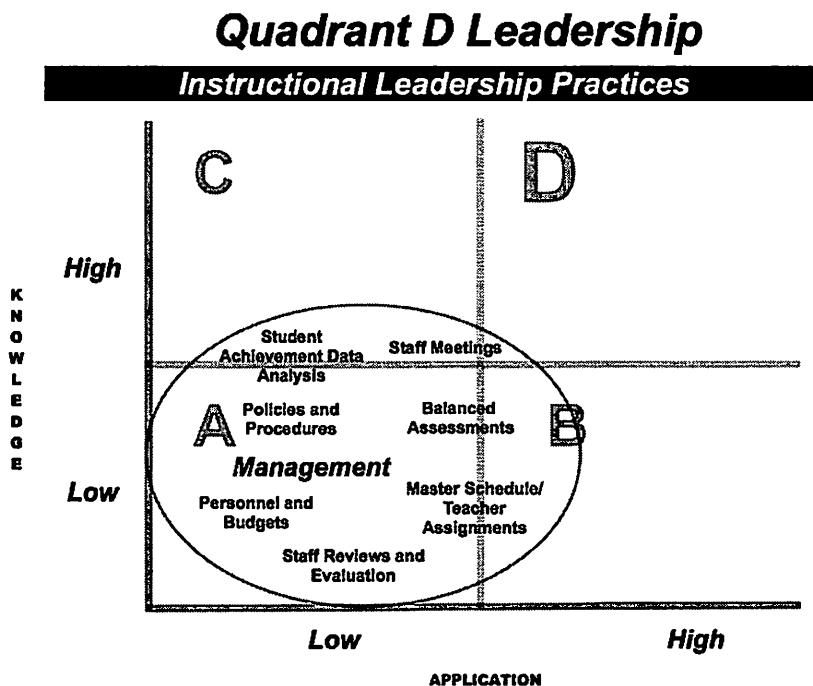
The graphic that follows shows how the 25 practices are organized along the continuums of the Quadrant D Leadership Framework. Some of these practices are connected to lower levels of leadership described as



Instructional Leadership — Quadrant D Leadership Practices

Quadrant A, while others are connected to the characteristics of Quadrant D. Leaders must balance multiple initiatives to improve instruction.

Management practices are essential for addressing necessary tasks, but they demand lower levels of leadership. When leaders are using these practices, they generally are operating in Quadrant A, as shown:



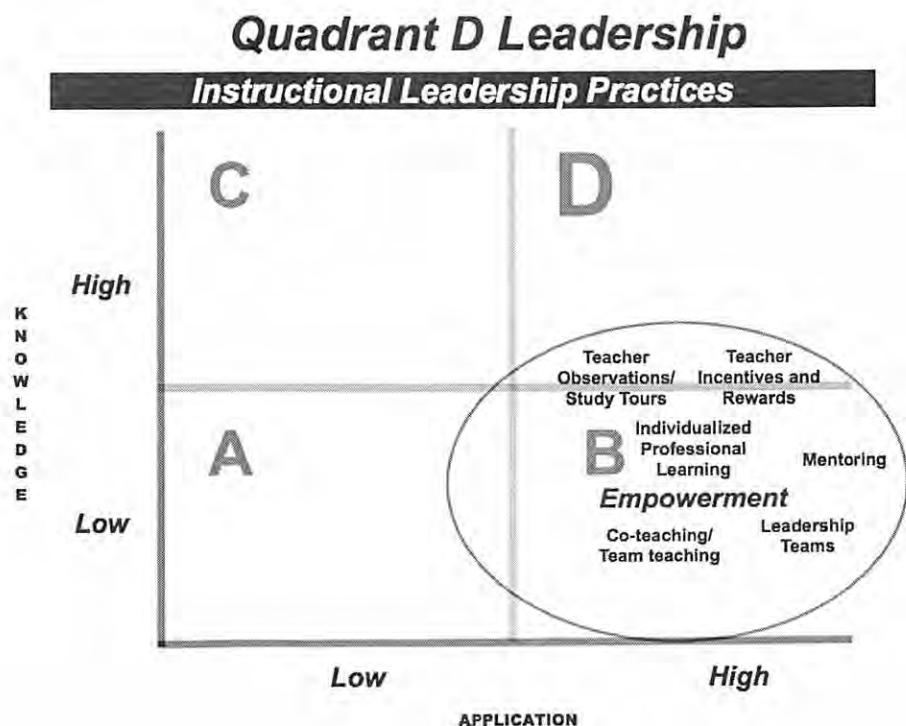
Management practices include:

- Policies and procedures: Schools, as systems, must have common, clear, and practical ways of operating to ensure consistency of instruction while taking care not to stifle innovation.
- Personnel and budgets: Hiring decisions and the allocation of limited resources are at the administrative core of high-quality learning.
- Master schedule/teacher assignments: It is essential for leaders to create school master calendars that ensure that time is being used wisely and that instructional assignments enable teachers to apply their talents toward greater school success.

2 Quadrant D Leadership

- Staff meetings: Staff meetings are more productive and have a greater impact on school success when agendas focus on instructional issues rather than on administrative ones.
- Staff reviews and evaluations: Staff improvement results from periodic, high-quality staff reviews, evaluation, and feedback.
- Balanced assessments: Students and teachers benefit from a cohesive system of formative and summative assessments to measure progress toward learning goals.
- Student achievement data analysis: High stakes, standardized tests provide valuable student data to inform areas of instruction in need of improvement.

Empowerment practices reflect high levels of leadership application and empowerment but suffer from the lack of a fully defined common school vision. They appear as part of Quadrant B on the framework.



Instructional Leadership — Quadrant D Leadership Practices

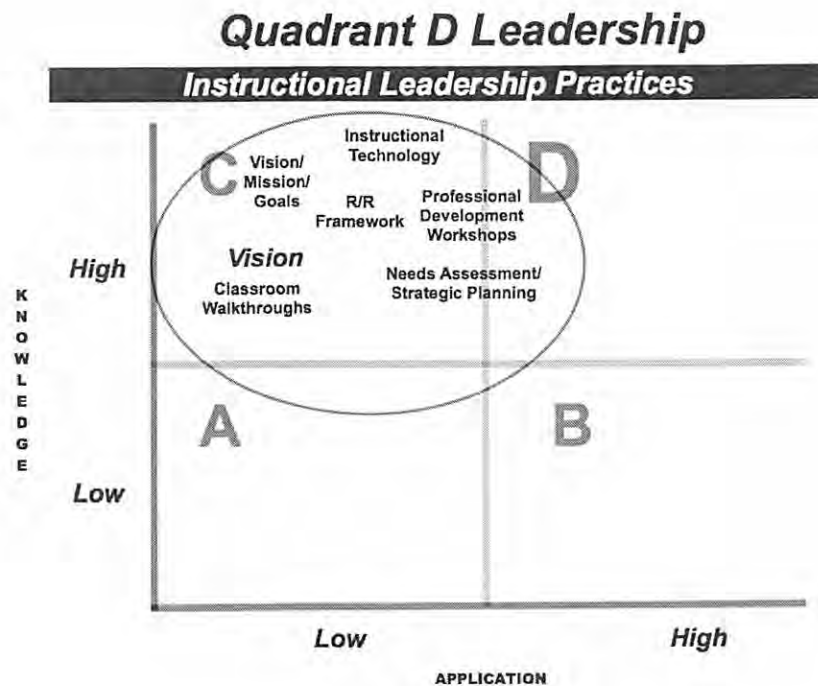
Empowerment practices include:

- **Leadership teams:** Collaborative teams build a common focus, enhance schoolwide problem solving, embrace data-based decision making, and share best practices.
- **Mentoring:** Beginning teachers or those who are new to a school learn from master teachers through ongoing personal conversations.
- **Co-teaching/team teaching:** Teachers working collaboratively build on strengths and share best practices to benefit students.
- **Teacher incentives and rewards:** Individual recognition and other incentives encourage teachers to take the steps necessary to improve.
- **Teacher observations/study tours:** Actually observing good instructional practice in action is an extremely powerful tool for teachers to improve their own instruction.
- **Individualized professional learning:** Self-directed learning offers professionals learning opportunities that relate directly to their needs.

Vision practices, which are associated with Quadrant C leadership, may reflect high levels of knowledge of leadership and creativity, but also indicate a less fully developed approach to empowerment.

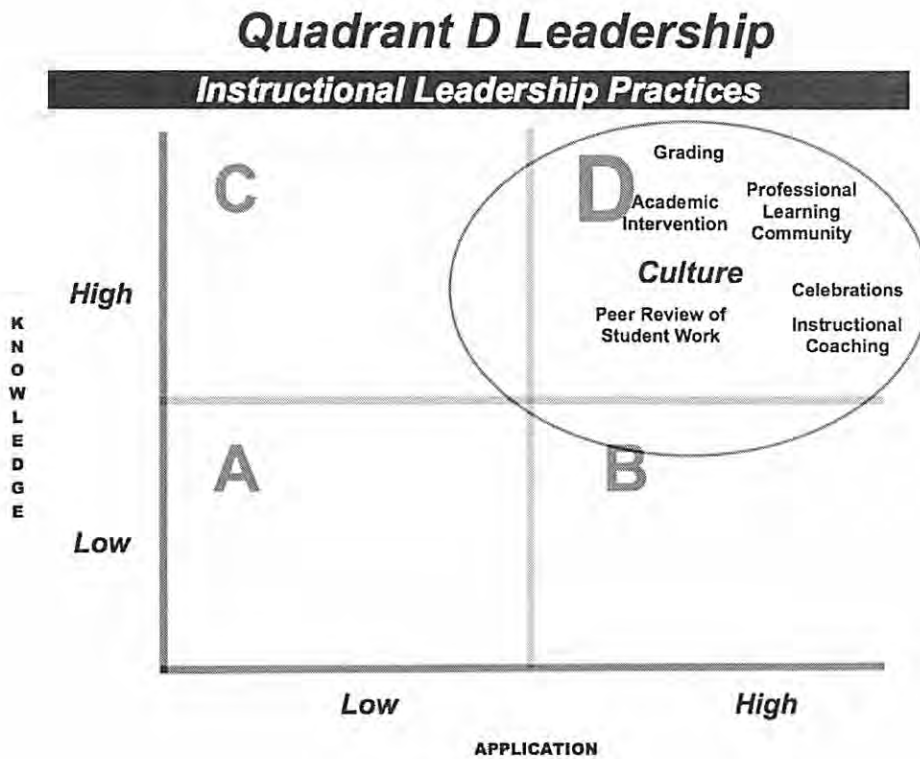
Vision practices include:

- **Vision/mission/goals:** When a leader establishes a vision for change that is based on new or revised goals, the school community begins to see the possibility of improvement.
- **Instructional technology:** Using current instructional technology in the classroom helps to introduce 21st century learning as well as engage students. Instructional technology conveys a vision that schools are up-to-date with contemporary society and relevant to preparing students for their future.
- **Rigor/Relevance Framework:** This is the most powerful tool for quantifying aspirations for rigorous and relevant instruction and assessment.



- Needs assessment/strategic planning: To achieve success and provide targeted improvement, leaders must help staff carefully craft strategic actions based on observed needs.
- Classroom walk-throughs: Short, frequent classroom observations reinforce expectations, create opportunities to engage and support staff, and build a rich culture that supports quality instruction.
- Professional development workshops: High-quality group learning from experts is a key strategy for improving instruction.

Culture practices help establish an environment that supports improvement. These Quadrant D practices reflect high levels of knowledge and the application of leadership that will sustain significant instructional improvement.



Culture practices include:

- Academic intervention: Ensuring that every student succeeds frequently requires timely intervention to provide personalized, alternative instruction.
- Instructional coaching: Onsite peers stimulate teacher reflection and change through regular observation, frequent support, and personal advice in implementing proven instructional practices.
- Peer review of student work: When teachers share high quality student work with one another, they support the development of high quality instruction.

- **Grading:** School policies and teacher practices around grading have a significant impact on the school culture in terms of instruction and student achievement.
- **Celebrations:** Public recognition, rituals, and social events are means of renewing staff enthusiasm and the commitment to school success.
- **Professional learning community:** Quadrant D leaders cultivate an environment in which teachers share values, vision, and leadership and support one another in collective, ongoing learning.

Summary

Effective leadership does not reside in a single position, but encompasses the diversified skills of many. It is this distributed leadership that defines successful schools. The Quadrant D Leadership Framework guides leaders in their daily actions and encourages them to reflect on the role of school leadership in sustaining school improvement and student achievement.

Quadrant D Leadership is characterized by a leader's understanding of and ability to use varying strategies to create the structures, systems, and collaborative and supportive culture necessary for sustained change. True Quadrant D leaders will move among the skill sets of each of the framework's quadrants in order to meet the demands of running a school, but they do so with an eye toward cultivating leadership density and empowering staff and students to play significant roles in decision making and problem solving.

High-quality instruction is at the core of school improvement, and instructional leadership is an essential aspect of Quadrant D Leadership. The remainder of this kit focuses on instructional leadership, which is organized around three basic areas — context, target, and practices — that frame planning and action to support high-quality curriculum delivery. Aspects of context and target are discussed in chapters 4 and 5.

To help educators put theory into action, chapters 6 through 9 focus on the 25 essential instructional practices — organized by the quadrants of the leadership framework — that are associated with effective leadership for sustainable and systemic change.

Instructional Leadership — Quadrant D Leadership Practices

Chapter 3 presents excerpts from conversations with successful Quadrant D leaders — real-life examples for aspiring Quadrant D leaders to consider as they learn about the theories and models they can apply to their own efforts.



Chapter 3

Conversations with Quadrant D Leaders

Introductions

In its work with schools and sharing best practices, the International Center for Leadership in Education is often asked similar questions about leadership in schools. This chapter poses the most frequently asked questions about instructional leadership to eight principals who are some of the best in the field.

While there is much to be learned from educators who lead small magnet schools, charter schools, and theme academies, this chapter focuses mostly on principals who lead, or who have led, comprehensive schools. These are the schools that many find challenging. Yet, the schools represented by these principals are outstanding learning communities. The principals would be the first to say that they could not have achieved success alone, but certainly their leadership made a significant difference. Here are profiles of school leaders who work in Quadrant D, followed by their comments.

Joy Barnhart began teaching in January 1965 in Corpus Christi, Texas. After moving to Dallas, she taught 8th grade math, was an elementary counselor for three years, a middle school assistant principal for several years, and a principal for 34 years. She retired in 2007.

Joy served in large urban minority schools in the Dallas Independent School District that were low performing when she arrived. Since then the high school has become the highest performing comprehensive school in the district. All three schools have received state and national recognition for closing the achievement gap. W.T. White High School was recognized by the College Board for its successful Advanced Placement program. The school increased its AP testing from 198 exams, taken mostly by white students in 1998, to more than 1,300 exams given predominantly to minority students in 2007.

Susan Gunderman, who retired in 2007, is a 34-year veteran educator who began her career in 1974 as an English teacher and then served as a principal for 14 years. She spent a year preparing for the opening of Kennesaw Mountain High School, in Kennesaw, Georgia, in 2000. The school opened with 1,200 students and today has more than 3,100

students. It is a nationally recognized high school that exemplifies the goals of rigor, relevance, and relationships. Sue's positive philosophy about building relationships among students, parents, and teachers; establishing traditions of excellence; and fostering community partnerships framed the vision for the school and helped define it as one of the premier high schools in the Southeast.

Aaron Hansen is passionate about the well being of kids. Mr. Hansen started his career as a high school English teacher and now serves as the principal of White Pine Middle School, in Ely, Nevada, and as a part-time consultant. *ABC World News with Charles Gibson* and the Fox Network *Fox and Friends* have featured him and the school in their programs reporting the cultural innovations used at White Pine. He was named "Innovative Educator of the Year" for the state of Nevada in 2009. He and the school were featured in Ray McNulty's book, *It's Not Us Against Them*. Under his administration White Pine has become a high achieving school, dramatically improving achievement. In 2009 it was chosen as a National Model School, and honored as a School of Distinction by the International Center for its "commitment to rigor, relevance, and relationships for all." The school was honored with the title of Empowerment School in 2008 and chosen to be one of six Nevada model schools in the same year. Aaron believes that every student deserves to feel safe, accepted, listened to, and have a meaningful relationship with an adult.

William R. Latson, during his 15-year education career in Florida, has served as principal at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, and acting district director, teacher, and coach for various school sports, among other roles. He is now principal at Polo Park Middle School in Wellington, Florida. Will created the state's only kindergarten accelerated readiness program, which is being replicated across Florida with a goal of increasing student school readiness and graduation rates. Among his awards and recognitions are the Assistant Principal of the Year Award given by the Florida Minority Educators Association. Will also has been honored by the African American Educator Alliance for his efforts as an administrator. His efforts at Calusa Elementary led to the school being named the Model School for Inclusive Education by the International Center in 2008. He has served on the academic board of directors at Keiser College and the Weiss School, prepared students at the University of Florida for job entry, and is an adjunct professor in education and social studies at Palm Beach Community College.

Muriel Summers is principal of A.B. Combs Leadership Magnet Elementary School, in Raleigh, North Carolina. Recognized in 2001 as Wake County's Principal of the Year, she has presented at national, state, and local conferences and consults with schools across the United States. Using Stephen Covey's *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* and Deming's *Profound Knowledge* as the foundation of their leadership model, Muriel and her staff have created the first leadership elementary school in the nation. Boasting students from over 58 countries, A.B. Combs is one of the most diverse elementary schools in North Carolina. Due to the popularity of their unique model, their school hosts over 500 visitors a year from all over the world. During her seven-year tenure at A.B. Combs, Muriel has seen her school receive numerous awards, including Top Magnet School in America; Organizational Greatness Award – Franklin Covey Organization; National School of Character, semi-finalist; Intel Scholastic Leadership Award; National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence; National Magnet School of Excellence; North Carolina School of Excellence; and the North Carolina Governor's Entrepreneurial Award.

Susan Szachowicz is principal of Brockton High School in Brockton, Massachusetts. She has been at the large (4,300 students), comprehensive, urban high school for her entire career and describes herself as Brockton's greatest cheerleader. Originally a history teacher, she was the social science department head for many years and then became a housemaster. In 1999, she was appointed associate principal for curriculum and instruction. As associate principal, Sue directed the school's literacy initiatives to improve student achievement. She became Brockton's principal in 2004 and continues to be committed to education reform at the school and in the state. She has served on numerous state commissions on education reform and has been committed to "high expectations, high standards – no excuses."

Marilyn Vitiello retired in June 2009 after working 40 years in education. She has been a classroom teacher, instructional specialist, staff development facilitator, assistant high school principal, and for the last eight years, an elementary principal. Marilyn has worked on state committees in Massachusetts and New York, writing and implementing curriculum in kindergarten and mathematics. She has served as a mentor to other administrators and guided interns under her supervision to experiences that led them all to administrative positions. She has worked with students in their first school experiences to those about to walk the

stage. She believes that all students deserve the best opportunities to learn and grow every year; there are no give-away years for our future world citizens.

Kathleen Weigel is principal of Atlantic Community High School in Delray Beach, Florida, and an adjunct professor of educational leadership at Florida Atlantic University. Atlantic Community High School is part of Palm Beach County school district, the 11th largest in the nation. Atlantic is a high school of more than 2,500 students with a diverse population. The school has a prestigious International Baccalaureate Program that is ranked 37th largest in the world. In 2006 the high school moved to a new \$62.5 million facility.

Under Kathy's leadership, Atlantic has been restructured into several smaller learning communities, including Criminal Justice Academy, Army JROTC Academy, Construction Academy, Sports Management/Marketing Academy, and Teacher Education Academy. Students begin their high school journey at Atlantic in 9th and 10th grade academies. As they advance they increasingly participate in schoolwide academies.

1. There are times when school leaders need to be authoritarian to get things done and other times when leaders need to be more visionary, collaborative, or adaptive. How do you know when to set aside your authority posture and trust staff to take the right actions on behalf of student learning?

Barnhart: I think it is all based on data. When consistent use of common assessments and/or benchmarks shows students are learning, then the decision making becomes collaborative. When individual teacher performance reflects that, based on data, the students are mastering state standards, then teacher capacity is evident; the principal can encourage teachers to take ownership of student learning and leadership is shared.

Hansen: I think it is kind of like credit in a bank. You only have so much credit. You draw on that credit to make unilateral decisions and there have been times where I have. But, you can't rely on that very long. Even if you do build a productive school using a posture of authority, as soon

**When to
Empower
and When
Not to**

We need to develop leadership in a collaborative culture where we are solving problems together.

as you leave, the likelihood is that it will probably fail. That's one of Jim Collin's premises in his book, *Good to Great*.

My philosophy has been that as much as possible we need to develop leadership in a collaborative culture where we are solving problems together; not necessarily solving them for people or saying this is the way it is going to be. I believe leaders are problem creators, not problem solvers. What that means to me is that I really should be trying to frame the problem or challenge and empower other people to help solve the problem. If we trust teachers and give them the information they need to make the right decision, generally they will come to the right decisions and conclusions. It may not look like what we had envisioned, but I think that is usually the best way to go.

Latson: I know it is time to let go of the authoritarian position when the teachers begin to take action on issues prior to administration bringing the issues to their attention. This usually happens when teachers understand where the end goal is and have bought into that goal. Then teachers become more proactive and start identifying problems and needs and creating solutions. When teachers reach that point of problem solving, then I know they have taken actual ownership of the problem. At that point, an administrator can drop the authoritarian stance, relinquish power, and allow the emerging leadership to develop the necessary course of action. That's when I know we are doing the right thing and going in the right direction. My job, then, is to validate the positive behavior of the employees and say, "Great job."

Summers: I think it comes with really getting to know your staff, knowing who you can truly trust and also know which staff members are at the level where the judgments they make will be the right ones. Being the principal at the school for 11 years, I am able to entrust the staff because I know there are staff members that are much more knowledgeable in certain areas than I am. I entrust them to make certain decisions, with me being a listening ear.

My style of leadership is very much empowerment. Through that style of leadership I have seen that I am truly developing teachers as leaders. I think that as a leader you have to let go of your power and empower others. There are times when only you can make the decision. You have to have the courage to know that this is a decision that only I can make. Most of the time I am empowering others to help me in the decision.

Szachowicz: Yes, it is very true that my actions as a leader differ depending upon the circumstances and the personnel. I'd actually turn this question around and say that my normal action is to trust staff to act on behalf of student learning; however, those actions have been carefully structured within our learning objectives — in our case literacy. I wouldn't say our literacy initiative is authoritarian, but I would say that our instruction is very structured toward achieving our literacy goals. And, to ensure consistent implementation of these literacy objectives, we monitor this carefully — not in an authoritarian way, but by checking plans and collecting student work. In general, my approach as a leader is collaborative and is designed to get us all moving in the same direction as a team. There are times when collaboration has to be replaced with an authoritarian response. That decision for me depends on the circumstance and the individual. With individuals who have been problematic, weak teachers, not student-centered, I will become much more directive, even authoritarian. Our meetings will be pointed, directed, and documented. As you well know, the Quadrant D leader must work in all quadrants at various times.

There are times when collaboration has to be replaced with an authoritarian response.

Vitiello: If it seems to be a management decision, then make the tough decision and move on. If you feel that it's an instructional issue, it is most beneficial to gather as much information as you can and get the practitioners on board. That's the key. If they are part of the process of data gathering, research, and implementation, that is the best shot at a successful endeavor.

Weigel: I believe being a Quadrant D leader involves four driving and important elements: guidance, intuition, experience, and perception. With that being said, a successful leader needs to know when to operate as an authoritative, visionary, collaborative, or adaptive leader, using those elements. It is also about the duty one has as a leader to grow others. Then observe them, guide them, trust them. Ask questions. Listen to their answers. It becomes a push and pull. They, as emerging leaders, will show you they are ready. People begin taking initiative, or you might see others underutilized or disengaged because they may be bored or overwhelmed. It is the leader's responsibility to recognize when people are able and willing to do more. By giving one's power away, one actually becomes more powerful, even though that is not the goal of the leader. Nothing is more fulfilling than watching others grow and flourish because the leader has the skill to give more responsibility and guidance at the appropriate time. As a leader, when you can facilitate others in taking

By giving one's power away, one actually becomes more powerful.

leadership roles, everyone wins, especially the students. They are, after all, all that matters!

Focusing on Instruction

2. What are some ways to make sure the leader is influencing instruction in school rather than focusing on the many administrative tasks requiring your time and attention?

Barnhart: There were certain tasks that I delegated. By assessing the skills and interests of staff, I found people who wanted to contribute in simple but necessary tasks. One teacher complained that her room was not cleaned. I asked her to please keep me informed about her room and the entire hall as she arrived each morning. I thanked her for her invaluable help. One assistant principal successfully dealt with drug issues, another helped immensely with student conflicts. They assumed those responsibilities. Ask people to share tasks and express your appreciation. I did not ask anyone to share my relationship-building time with staff. I was constantly available to staff and students. I did the hour-and-a-half lunch duty every day so the staff and students knew where I could be found to address any issue they had.

Gunderman: Once again, rather than focusing on making change, focus on student achievement, which is a more specific and positive component of the change you are trying to implement. When you focus on student achievement, everything revolves around this vision of engaging students in high levels of learning and performance. Every decision you make for the school or about the school revolves around it, even field trips. How many field trips are students allowed to take? It goes back to that commitment of ensuring that the field trip will not get in the way of all the instruction the students need to be academically successful. It's not a matter of finding the time to promote change; it's a matter of using your time to reinforce the vision you have for student achievement.

Influence instruction by spending time in the classroom.

Hansen: Influence instruction by spending time in the classroom. Talk to teachers about strategies. Ask students and teachers in classrooms what students are supposed to be learning and why. I've attempted to define my job by thinking about things that will really have an affect on kids and learning. If what I'm doing doesn't directly affect kids, then I probably shouldn't be doing it. I see several things that are most important in my role. One is developing, sustaining, and defending the culture, and the other is professional development. Have your hands in professional

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development through collaborative conversation with the leadership team; that is a powerful way to impact what is happening in the classroom. If professional development is effective and ongoing it is probably the best way you are going to impact your classroom practices.

Latson: One way is to structure the organization and duties of the school so that the administrative tasks and responsibilities are clearly defined. In the summertime, I meet with my administrative and leadership teams and talk about their strengths and weaknesses. At that point, I give away a lot of my power as I assign others the responsibility of overseeing certain administrative duties. I share my thinking and how I would like things done, but I also give the administrators and teams the freedom to work out the details without being micro-managed. Many administrative tasks have to be delegated. The administrators do not need to be involved in many everyday matters. The secretarial staff can handle routine matters, such as school maintenance issues.

Once administrative tasks are organized, there is time to do walk-throughs with teachers, because that organizational plan affords administrators time to work with each of the curriculum areas. Some personnel may not be accustomed to working with true instructional leaders, who are spending time in classrooms and becoming involved with curriculum development, so it may take some time for teachers to understand that administrators also shoulder responsibilities for instructional involvement.

I also budget my time so that I handle many administrative duties before and after the regular school day. When students and teachers are here, I focus on making sure that instruction is sound. I have instructional focus meetings throughout the day, including meetings with children.

Summers: I think you have to make instruction your main focus. There are so many things that go on in a given day that if you don't define your time, your time is defined for you. I allot time in the classrooms. I like to do more than just a walk-through, by truly examining the work and spending time getting to know what the teacher is doing and what the children are learning. I spend at least two to three hours a day in the classroom when I'm at the building. I feel it's critical because if I'm not in there I don't know what is going on. Then I don't know how to help the teachers, and I don't know which children are struggling.

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Looking for rigor and
relevance is critical.

Szachowicz: Instruction is a huge issue and there is no question that promoting change and implementing improvement strategies mean long hours. But creating leadership teams is key to taking things off my plate as principal. Putting an associate principal for curriculum and instruction on the central office administrative team was one of the best things we could have done. The associate principal always keeps that intense focus on school improvement. Also, with the restructuring team and Performance Improvement Mapping group in place, I'm not the only one who has to plow through the data. We've built a structure of leadership that isn't about one person.

Vitiello: For me, modeling is the key. If you want a caring, welcoming school, then you will welcome everyone into the school every day. That means walking around to greet every staff member before students arrive and greeting all students when they enter the building. It sets the tone that this is our school, not my school. It's visiting classes every day and asking students what they are learning and why! Looking for rigor and relevance is critical. Students see that you care what is happening to them throughout the day and the staff know that you know what is going on in classrooms.

I also spent time looking at student achievement, I reviewed all reading and math tests. I reviewed and commented on every single report for all four quarters, for all of the students that were in my school. Just a little boast, that was about 9,000 report cards in seven years. So maybe you work later or on Saturday mornings, but it pays off in knowing how well students are achieving.

Weigel: You have to make time. You have to decide that it's important and say that I'm not going to let anything stop this. I use planning periods for small group discussions to facilitate the changes made on our campus. I use faculty meetings as best-practice sharing sessions rather than a place to gripe and talk about people not following rules. We use learning team meetings either in small groups or with a facilitator twice a month with me and then in different vertical/horizontal groups.

It is important to use as many opportunities as you can to have conversations. My department chairs are instructional leaders, not traditional department heads who count books. I meet with them twice a month. I meet with the curriculum team twice a month. I meet with the

students during their lunch periods twice a month. You just have to create the space in your day and say I'm going to do it and find the time. This is much like exercise. People who exercise regularly find the time. People who don't have any commitment to it will always find an excuse not to do it.

3. How do you get teachers on board and supportive of change in pursuit of rigor and relevance for all students?

Barnhart: Continually develop leadership skills of staff by involving them in the decision-making process, which includes all decisions on school operations. Spend most of the time with staff, always focusing on goals and expectations of performance.

Gunderman: It has been my experience that good teachers already are supportive of change. Good teachers want resources and strategies to get results for their students. Also, instead of focusing so much on the need for change, it is better to focus on specifically what needs to be done to promote student achievement.

Hansen: It is easier to get people to buy in when they have been part of the solution. Rick DuFour talks about creating shared knowledge. We should be reading things together. We should be talking and having conversations. We should have a vision that we've collectively created. When you get those things in place, they become part of the solution instead of having to sell buy in.

I think that sometimes people need to have the opportunity to really reflect. If you can create an authentic, real conversation about things that are important, such as rigor, relevance, and relationships, then generally teachers do what is right. They are a pretty amazing bunch of people. They are very optimistic overall and I think that if we give them the opportunity to make the right choices, they will. The leader's job is to structure the conversation so that they can come to the right decision. Then once they have, we have to create a plan and hold each other accountable to that plan.

Latson: The only way I've found to get teachers on board is to show where there is no rigor and where the relevance is lacking. You can bring an idea to a group of teachers, and no matter how good it is, if they can't

Gaining Staff Support

It is easier to get people to buy in when they have been part of the solution.

see how it impacts them directly, you can spend years trying to get them to support it. But you can show them individually and then build it up. Individually starting in their classroom, going to their departments, going to their school, going to their district and the state; that would be the only effective way I've found to do that.

You're showing them there is a need and there is usually a panic. You have to be prepared for the panic. They think, "Oh, I don't know. I don't know." Have a very candid conversation if they don't have the skill set. I'll point out it's not their fault. With all of the things going on, it's very difficult to train specifically but we will do that.

Then you have to arrange for them to receive the just-in-time training that will empower them. Now, my teachers do need the rigor and relevance training. But I'm in the process of getting them to understand they need it. That is taking a little bit of time because if I don't get a majority of teachers to understand it, then I bring it and they panic, and I'm going to lose a couple. But if I have enough of them already on board and I lose a few, then they can't dissuade the other group.

Summers: There are times we may not know all we need to know about a potential change, but we have to jump off that mountain and we have to make it happen. If we make mistakes along the way, then we will learn from that. We aren't going to crash and burn, we are going to be in a better place.

Someone said that they don't think I've ever said no to them. I may have manipulated their thinking a little bit but I don't think I've ever said no to a teacher. I've hired the right people. I can trust them. If they fail, I say, "You're forgiven and we'll learn from it." I think the former superintendent was that kind of leader for me. He may have known that what I was going to do might not be the right thing, but he let me fail and he was there to pick me up when I did. He modeled that for me and I try to model that for those whom I serve.

Szachowicz: We used the data to make the case that change was needed. Massachusetts sends excellent test data back to the schools on the high-stakes exams. In our school, the failure rate in the first years of the state tests was disgraceful. It was 76% in math and 44% in English. The data became a powerful tool for us to use to show that we needed to do something. Even people who weren't particularly interested in change could not say, "Leave us alone, this is working," because it wasn't.

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Vitiello: Let the teachers know they are appreciated. Set up common planning times and attend all meetings. Be a good listener. Don't talk too much. Invite a representative from each grade level and each constituent group to sit on every subcommittee. Celebrate successes at faculty meetings, in the faculty room, any place you can. When a decision needs to be made, use the building-level decision-making group after they have gotten feedback from their constituent groups. It's long and sometimes laborious, but it is worth it in the end.

Weigel: As a leader, you must put ideas on the table and let staff think about them. In my school, I discuss ideas and new ways of doing things during faculty meetings or learning team meetings when whole groups of educators are present.

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about them.

4. How do you deal with resistant people who constantly challenge any proposed change?

Barnhart: Spend time with resistant personnel, especially observing their classes. Address the student performance expectations with the students in the teacher's classroom. I ask the teacher to add comments about the expectations while I am in the class. A group of students came to my office and stated that they were not learning much in AP European history. I was aware of the problem and had been working with the teacher, not seeing much improvement. I asked the teacher to visit with me and the students so the students could discuss their concerns. The students were professional and respectful. After the conference, the teacher resigned. High school students know what should be happening in a class, especially if the principal is constantly sharing the vision and expectations with all students and staff and believes they can perform to the expectations.

Gunderman: You have to set non-negotiable standards. In our school, the non-negotiable standard is that we are going to provide instruction for students at the highest level that allows them to show their mastery through performance. Then the tool that we all agreed on as a commitment among the staff was working with the International Center's Rigor/Relevance Framework.

There are some teachers who are already superstars with this. They take off running out of the gate. And, the majority of teachers want to do this;

Dealing with Resistant Staff

The main message to these resistant individuals is that you can't teach badly and teach in this school.

they want success for their students. But, they need direction and step-by-step training.

The very few who say they don't want to be involved in implementing a change that is so important to school growth have to be dealt with individually. Take them into your office and say, "Let's look at your data. Let's look at your success with your students." Show how invariably the students aren't being as successful as they should be. The main message to these resistant individuals is that you can't teach badly and teach in this school. But, you also have to direct them toward the resources that will help empower them to want to make the change.

Hansen: The first thing that maybe you have to recognize is that you are going to have people that resist change. Recognizing that that is part of the change process is pretty important. One way we've dealt with that is to confront them, in what Susan Scott calls the "Fierce Conversation." Tell them in 60 seconds what you are seeing. You name the problem and then listen.

We need to seek to understand. Sometimes it ends up being counseling, but it is important that we listen and hear what they have to say. They might have some really legitimate reasons for why they are resisting something.

You are always going to have that resisting group. But if you can develop a large group of people who build a culture, then a lot of times the peer pressure brings them along. If you have enough people buying into creating and doing, indirect pressure is placed on those who are resisting the culture and most of the time they will come along.

Latson: You bring them on your leadership team and allow them to sit in on leadership meetings when we are discussing the issues, so they can hear and be a part of the discussion as to what we need to change and how we need to do it. Another useful tactic is being very transparent. Any time I need to make a change, whether it comes from the district or state or is something we need to do, I share all the information, all the documentation with the teachers. I go through it with them so they can see what we are up against, what we need to do, or why this change needs to be made.

Summers: I would do everything in my power to help someone see the vision of our school. I want them to feel the vision, to be part of the vision. That's why when we write our vision and mission statements everyone is involved in the process. Jim Collins says it is getting the right people on the bus and in the right seats. If there is someone on the staff that is not moving our vision forward after we have done everything we could do to bring that person along, then I try to help provide them with a new opportunity somewhere else.

Szachowicz: We get this question all the time about buy-in because we have such a big schoolwide literacy initiative that has contributed enormously to the overall success of our school. To implement this initiative, we first gathered a group of people who were very interested in doing something — it became our Restructuring Committee. We did not have the buy-in of everybody, but we believed that incorporating this initiative was absolutely the right thing to do.

Most people are on middle ground — that is, they are willing to try something new, but they have to have a sense of security. For all staff, you must provide support and train them appropriately. You can't make them tread water, not knowing what they're doing so they feel like they are going to embarrass themselves in front of their colleagues or their classes. For the staff who were resistant, we just said, "You have to do this. Here are the dates that you have to do this by." We went into classes and monitored and collected student work. There was a lot of moaning and groaning and the union was involved. The worst case scenario involved a department head who resisted in every way possible. We dismissed him. He had more than 34 years in the system. It was awful and I didn't like what we had to do, but it's the kind of stuff that you sometimes have to do when you're in a position of leadership.

Vitiello: Find out what those people are resistant to and why. Ask them to participate in the various committees. Keep them in the loop of information and see what can be done to allay their fears. Sometimes peer pressure as well as peer support can move mountains.

Sometimes peer pressure as well as peer support can move mountains.

Weigel: As a leader, you can't change your focus to appease resistant people. You have to nurture the top 15% and once they figure out what the change entails, they'll sell it to about 70% of the rest of the staff. To make this happen, you put the staff into groups and have them work both horizontally and vertically. This means that all of the departments

work vertically through all grade levels and then they work together in horizontal grade level teams or career academies. This permits teachers the opportunity to really reflect on these ideas and figure out what aspects need to be included to make a change work for the students. This leaves the 15% of the staff who are resistant to change. They will say, "This too shall pass," or "We'll wait and see what will happen." There are always going to be people who just won't buy into a new initiative.

The Leadership Team

All do not assume leadership responsibilities, but most will.

5. Describe the school leadership team that you used to make change happen.

Barnhart: We found the staff who wanted to participate in school improvement measures and share the school's vision. Meeting consistently with departments, knowing personnel and their skills and contributions, and asking them to help others will result in an esprit de corps that fosters change. All do not assume leadership responsibilities, but most will. There was a novice math teacher last year who was scared to death when she started teaching at our school. By the time she was coached and trained, she volunteered to be the lead teacher in algebra. She became very successful and was eager to lead.

Gunderman: Our school improvement team was made up of teachers from all departments who had high credibility with their peers. These teachers delivered training in rigor and relevance. Their credibility as master teachers was important in getting other people involved in the process of change. We also had students on our training team after we realized that we were doing all this work to help students improve, but we weren't telling them what we were doing. Once we trained members of our student leadership, they went out and started training other students. That added a whole new dimension to our leadership team.

Hansen: When we started, I invited anyone on the staff that wanted to be part of the leadership group. Some people came and went. Some people came and stayed. Then we actually went out and invited some people who we knew were opinion leaders in the school and hadn't become part of the team. However, we unintentionally created a somewhat exclusive group. This year we changed it and now have what we call "cabinets." The cabinets work as advisory groups to me as the principal and they have specific charges. For example, the professional development cabinet, the

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positive behavior cabinet, the family friendly cabinet, and a few others are really addressing the needs that we have this year. Another one is depth of knowledge, which is basically rigor and relevance.

To start, we felt we needed a strong leadership team — a group of people who would make the decisions. But now, our culture is such that we can afford to have these different groups. We are trying to build leadership capacity by having the different groups and having more people be leaders.

Latson: I'm changing from the traditional leadership team that many schools in the district use, comprised of department chairs along with ESE (exceptional student education) contact and guidance. I have expanded that leadership body to include non-instructional representation by custodial and student representatives. We need their perspective. Instruction is our main goal, but I want everyone to be in the know and to have some say in our decisions.

We're also creating a second leadership team with the students including representation from all of the student groups. These two leadership teams would meet to make teachers understand students' perspective and vice versa.

Summers: There is one teacher from each grade level that is selected by their teammates to serve for a two-year period of time. My goal is that everyone gets the opportunity to serve in that leadership capacity. It's just a matter of when is the right time for a person to serve. Colleagues select the person they think can best help move that grade level forward. After the two-year term, someone else comes on board. After year one, the lead team people are looking at who will be their replacement and they start grooming them for that role six months ahead of time. We are always thinking of a succession plan in terms of leadership.

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Szachowicz: Our Restructuring Committee was indispensable in the implementation of our literacy initiative that has made our school what it is today. The word "restructure" has special meaning to our school. We were so dysfunctional that we couldn't just tinker around the edges with change. We needed to restructure our school in so many ways.

The committee initially was formed to change the school schedule because we were in violation of the state's time-and-learning regulation. We were a group of about 20 teachers and administrators who worked

together to look at schedules to see how we could meet the mandate of the law as well as what would be an optimal teaching and learning time.

After we fixed the schedule, we expanded the committee and called it the Restructuring Committee. We also expanded the group to include representation from all departments. It became a group of 30-34 teachers and administrators. During these meetings, everyone is equal around the table. I couldn't imagine working without this committee. It's my think tank. It is the voice of change. It also puts the brakes on suggested changes that don't have a lot of weight.

In addition to the Restructuring Committee, we have two other groups that focus on school reform. One is the administrative leadership team, which consists of myself, the associate principals, housemasters, assistant housemasters, and the department heads. There also is the Performance Improvement Mapping (PIM) Team, which interprets data and presents it to the Restructuring Committee. PIM members really roll up their sleeves and look at the data to bring it to the next group. Some staff are on all three and some are on just one.

Vitiello: At the building level there is a building leadership team. It is made up of one representative from each grade level, each special area, special education, building aides, building assistants, parents, and a representative from the community. Key in the planning of the meetings is an agenda and specific start and end times. Also, using a timekeeper is helpful.

Weigel: The leadership team that everyone would expect is composed of administrators, program coordinators, and other stakeholders. My administrative team consists of these individuals, plus two police officers, a guidance director, chief of security, and an athletic director. These are the people who all have a stake in the students other than in a teaching capacity.

Teachers, however, are an essential component to a leadership team.

Teachers, however, are an essential component to a leadership team. When we initiated smaller learning communities, I had an epiphany. I realized my leadership team could theorize, but the teachers were the ones who implemented this process.

I picked key teachers, such as the ELL coordinator, the ESE coordinator, and the ROTC lead instructor to create the Daggett Team. This team had

the responsibility of carrying main messages to the rest of the staff. The team modified some of the messages to be more practical and realistic, and this helped to sell changes and new concepts to the rest of the staff.

6. What is the most important support needed from districts to enable schools to change and improve?

Barnhart: The principal should develop relationships with district personnel. I spent time with the budget specialist, the human resource administrator, and the director of maintenance and custodial services. They knew my goals and my test scores. Because of the relationships, there was usually a positive response when I needed something from their department. The change a district could make was to stop redundant requests for information it already had access to at the central office. The document in question could be printed and I could review and sign it and not have to take time to duplicate information the district already has.

Gunderman: It would be great if district offices, as well as higher level offices, would listen to their schools. I have been to several high level meetings, including one that was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education and another by the state DOE. We thought the meetings provided wonderful opportunities that allowed practitioners to talk about the challenges and successes of the No Child Left Behind Act. Unfortunately, I felt as though the state and federal administrators didn't listen to us and make the changes that could easily have been made. So I think the district could listen to practitioners and teachers as they say, "I could have more time with my students if this change were made."

Hansen: The district said, "Here are the problems with the middle school and what you are facing" when I went into the job and they empowered my staff and me to get the job done. They said they needed me to improve the situation, the school needed to be better, and these are the issues. Basically, there was a sense of accountability with that. There wasn't a time frame such as two years to figure it out. There was an urgency from the community and other places because things weren't healthy. Basically, it was, "Here is the job and we'll get out of the way and let you do it." They have been very supportive, cheering us on as we attempt to do what is best for kids. They have helped with resources when they could, and I feel like I have had a couple of mentors help me when I have gotten disappointed or discouraged when we experienced setbacks.

District Support

It would be great if district offices, as well as higher-level offices, would listen to their schools.

The major district support needed is for personnel and teacher training.

Latson: The major district support needed is personnel and teacher training. If I don't have support from the district to train teachers as well as to remove teachers who are ineffective, there is a negative impact on the school. When I've identified teachers who need training, the most important assistance would be the district providing the appropriate support immediately. I can make 95% of the other changes through hard work and getting my teachers to work together.

Summers: The two biggest things I need from them are to trust that I know what I need for my school and to remove barriers that prevent us from doing what we feel is most important for our children. Wake County does a wonderful job with that. If I say, "Here is what I want to make happen" and I know it is a little left of center, I always go in with the data to support what I need to do. I can't think of a time they have told me that I couldn't do it. I so appreciate the trust they have in me. I think it is the number-one thing. They trust that you do what is right for your school, and then they stand out of the way and let you make it happen.

Szachowicz: There are some things that, as principal, I can deal with and change — internal things. There are other things that need the central office's intervention. For example, the district could look at the structures in the school that may impede progress, or find where help is needed and provide that help. In looking at curriculum and instruction, our superintendent created and supported the position of associate principal for curriculum and instruction, and added four instructional resource specialists. They are part-time teachers, but they also work as mentors and coaches in the classrooms. He did it in the four testing areas — English, math, science, and history. I couldn't create those positions because they were tied to the budget, which the district office has more control over. The district must look at what positions will help support the school's mission.

School districts also should consider offering Challenge for Change Grants. Just like any public education system, we get professional development money based on the state's per-pupil expenditure. Our superintendent takes some of that money for a Challenge for Change fund. Principals can apply for a grant to support a school improvement change. These funds are local dollars so it isn't like the headache of trying to apply for a federal grant. This is how we fund our Restructuring Committee. Every year I apply for the maximum amount. We are very aggressively going after the money to support change at our school. The

concept behind the Challenge for Change Grant is huge. When you didn't plan for something but you want to try something, here is the way you can try it. The teachers are paid to be on the Restructuring Committee and we meet on Saturdays.

Vitiello: At all levels, the board, superintendent, and district level, there needs to be an open mind to change and a willingness to let an individual school community take risks. School districts are often looking for commonality and this is not always a force for change. Districts need to allow the individual buildings to have some uniqueness and this needs to be supported at all levels.

Weigel: I think districts tend to get in the way and they need to review what their role is. They need to be an extension of schools. When we come up with new ideas, they need to facilitate ways to make it happen. We're really lucky in that our district does that. We ask and it figures out how to make it happen.

I've also been in a district that didn't do that. In these situations, every time you take a step they stand in your way. In one case in particular, every time we came up with an idea the legal department would come up with a way to say it couldn't happen or it would put the district in a liability situation. My response to them was that every time I open the door in this school I put us in a liability situation.

7. How do you respond to the teachers who say focusing on rigor and relevance is a good idea, but they don't have time for that because they have to deal with covering all the topics they are expected to teach?

Barnhart: Acknowledge that the task is difficult. As I observed classes, I would ask the teacher, "What project do you think the students could complete that would reflect an application of the concept taught?" Training on developing Quadrant D lessons, as well as AP training, helped staff understand how to teach a rigorous lesson. I asked the teacher who demonstrated rigorous lessons in class to help others in the department's planning process.

Gunderman: Whenever I hear people say they have to focus on covering the curriculum, I envision skipping stones across a pond. It's a

There needs to be an open mind to change and a willingness to let an individual school community take risks.

**Managing
Instructional
Time**

It's student achievement and engagement that comprise our focus and our goal. Rigor and relevance are the tools we use to get there.

very shallow concept, with no depth — “I just have to get over it. Start with Chapter 1 and march through to 33.” This mentality doesn't allow room for the deep understanding that students must have to master the subject matter at hand. So when teachers say, “I don't have time for this rigor and relevance stuff,” I reply it's not rigor and relevance, it's student achievement and engagement that comprise our focus and our goal. Rigor and relevance are the tools we use to get there.

Hansen: It goes back to shared knowledge. There is a lot of information and research that shows that if we make the investment of getting to the deeper levels of thinking, students will retain the information better and we won't have to go back and re-teach. We've done a lot of work in narrowing our curriculum, spiraling it better, and hopefully teaching it in a better way so that students really learn it.

We've encouraged experimenting. We've encouraged people to try Gold Seal Lessons. Try teaching this concept the way you have and then the way this teacher does. At the end, give the common assessment unit. In two months, out of the blue, give the assessment again and see who has retained it and who hasn't.

Latson: The first thing I ask is, “How well is covering topics working for your students?” I follow up with the question, “If your child were in your classroom and you were teaching that way, would you really want your child in that room?” I'll use their phrasing because their phrasing is passive, not direct and prescriptive. I'm not demanding change; I am just having the teachers reflect on how they present the information and how effective it is for all students. I remind the teachers that their value is not in covering topics but in focusing on rigor and relevance and challenging students to think in ways that will help them move to the next level.

The moment teachers saw how excited the children were, they said we can never ever go back.

Summers: Rigor and relevance can not be an event, it has to be the way in which we do business. We started off as if it were an event, doing a project-based learning activity once a month, twice a month. We knew by the excitement of the children it was something that we had to make happen more regularly. The moment teachers saw how excited the children were, they said we can never ever go back.

We analyzed the work that the children were given to do. When teachers saw that most of it was Quadrant A and not in the upper quadrants, it was an awareness of what we are really giving the children to do. As they

introduced work that was more rigorous and relevant, they started to see kids more engaged and eager to learn more. The work was much more difficult and what was so wonderful was that the children could actually do it. Although the teachers felt that the children could never do it, they were able to.

I think the testing climate is one of the biggest barriers for most teachers. They are afraid that if they do more things that are rigorous, relevant, and especially real-world related, it isn't in alignment with any test we give. Last year, through doing it enough, our teachers saw great results in testing so they were more willing to let go and try to instruct this way all the time.

Szachowicz: I was a history teacher, so I feel like I can really answer this question. The Massachusetts state history exam has every single conceivable thing that you could ever imagine.

If students have rigorous and relevant instruction and the skills they need to think critically, they will be able to plow through the questions on the state assessments. If you just touch things on the surface, the students aren't going to remember it anyway. The key is to make the curriculum as relevant as possible for the students.

Vitiello: The most important factor is a never-ending cycle of support for teachers. That is something you need to work on as a total community. If teachers have time to plan and share ideas in rigor and relevance, it is not so overwhelming for them. I think that when they realize they can start small, do one little piece and another little piece, and build on what they've done, they feel comfortable. Just the sharing of ideas is critical. Sharing the progress that was made at faculty meetings helps to widen the circle of information and accountability for teachers.

Weigel: As International Center CEO Bill Daggett says, "You teach children, not subjects." Teachers use the coverage argument as an excuse so then they can rely on the textbooks. If I were "queen of the universe" I would get rid of every textbook. Some teachers get lazy and just duplicate quizzes and answers from the book. If instruction is rigorous and relevant, teachers should have to make their own authentic tests because the students will take them to places they never thought of going. Students ask, "Why am I doing this?" "What does this mean to me in real life?" That's the chant of any high school student. Covering just the

Covering just the curriculum and not making it applicable to real-life situations ignores what students are eager to learn and do.

curriculum and not making it applicable to real-life situations ignores what students are eager to learn and do.

Celebrating Success

8. How important is celebrating success, and what are some of the ways to recognize progress?

Barnhart: Personalizing increments of success is as necessary with teachers as it is with students. I would observe a class and tell the teacher in front of the students what a wonderful lesson he/she presented. Then I would tell the students how lucky they are to have this teacher.

Gunderman: Celebrating success is so important. Teachers aren't any different from students. We all like to be recognized for hard work and have feedback on our performance. With that in mind, we took every opportunity to recognize teachers. For instance, Kennesaw still has something called the Golden Apple that is passed from one teacher to the next at each faculty meeting. One teacher compliments a colleague before passing the Golden Apple to that person. Each month, the Golden Apple is given to someone else for a special reason. This fun moment of appreciation brought people out of their classrooms and out of their little circle and got them to understand what was going on in other departments and what their colleagues were doing. A celebration of a job well done by your peers is always really special.

Students now select a Quadrant D Teacher of the Month.

When the students became involved, this small portion of the faculty meeting was elevated to a much larger event in which students now select a Quadrant D Teacher of the Month. During the selection process, students get to nominate a teacher based on a favorite Quadrant D lesson. The students must describe the lesson and tell why it is worthy of recognition. A group from the student council reads all of the nominations, and then we all vote on a winner. Afterward, we go to that teacher's classroom and celebrate the lesson with gifts and prizes.

We also did an American Idol competition in which teachers developed a Quadrant D lesson and then came together in a faculty meeting to present their lessons and show off their best practices.

Hansen: It is hugely important. One of the best ways teachers can feel or celebrate success is by looking at the data. If they look at the data and

see that their students are improving, that's the best reward. We have a lot of data that shows that the students are learning compared to pre-assessments, cheering us on as we attempt to do what is best for kids. It is a good chance for me to say, "Great job." I'm able to ask specific questions about the strategies they use to get that data. They get to brag a little bit. For our school, it has been a powerful way to get positive feedback.

We have events such as holiday parties and data celebrations when we get state test results. I write personal notes to people to thank individual staff. In the staff lounge, anyone can write thank you's and post them up when we catch someone doing something right and good.

Latson: Celebrating success is critical. That is something I learned when I became an administrator. In that first year, I forgot about celebrating successes. Luckily, I had a veteran assistant principal who pointed out to me that morale was low, but the teachers were working hard, and it didn't mean anything unless appreciation came from me. It made me reflect on when, as a teacher, my principal came in and noted that my class was going great. I remembered how much that empowered me. I realized that I had to help teachers celebrate their successes. My administrative staff handles our many celebrations in a few different ways. Our assistant principals go out and give five formal compliments a week, and once a day we look to find someone doing something good and focus on the positive with that individual.

Summers: I think celebrating for the children and for the adults is critical. I had that realization five years ago when we were working so hard and not celebrating along the way. Staff were getting burned out. People weren't nearly as excited, fired up, and motivated.

I think celebrating for the children and for the adults is critical.

How you celebrate is equally as important as wanting to celebrate. Earlier in my career we had a system of celebration that only made a select few people, children included, feel good about what they had done. I soon realized one-fourth of our children were walking out feeling wonderful and the other three-fourths were walking out with their heads hung, and parents wondered why they were called to be at something where their child is not being recognized. This forced us to bring about a change and create a system where everyone is celebrated for his or her contribution.

We have Celebrate Success assemblies once a quarter. The whole grade level celebrates the accomplishments. For example, this quarter compared to last quarter we increased the number of students attending school and more children getting to school on time. They saw the growth from last quarter's assessment versus this quarter's assessment. It is all data driven, based on the accomplishments of the grade level. That changed the way teachers viewed not just their children, but all of the children on their team.

After the assembly the parents and children return to classrooms for awards to children nominated by their peers, for such things as the kindest or the most helpful. The children come up with the list of awards and they select who gets what award. Everyone gets recognized. The class may say because a special education student scored this many points on an assessment it took them over the top. It was that performance that helped the class get breakthrough performance. It is done very sincerely, very genuinely; and on those days every child walks out feeling wonderful.

Szachowicz: We celebrate everything and I think it has been a big reason for the culture change in our school. In the past, when we had failing scores, Brockton celebrated athletic victories. Athletics are exciting and important, but academics have to be the priority of the school.

Now we celebrate student achievement across the board. During every term there is an honor roll assembly and we do something special for these students. One year, we did a show of dancing across the decades. We, the administrators and teachers, did stupid things like swing dancing, the hustle, the twist, and we brought it up to current times. There was break dancing, hip-hop, and we were awful. The kids were screaming because it was so bad and so funny. They were dancing in the aisles with us. In 2007, we had 1,299 students on the honor roll –the highest number ever.

We also invite parents to celebrate the Adam's Scholarships that their children have earned. The state scholarship offers four years of tuition based on the MCAT scores. It's amazing the number of parents who come to see their children get this recognition.

Our sports mascot is the Brockton Boxer, so we have a Boxer of the Month celebration in which we honor students who have done something nice for someone. The recognition is not based on academics, but rather

Athletics are exciting and important, but academics have to be the priority of the school.

doing the right thing. The selected students make their own ice cream sundae with the principal.

A small thing that I do all the time is send notes to students and teachers to recognize them for things they have done. Local businesses donate certificates and gifts. If somebody does something really special or was nominated for something, I'll give a gift certificate and a little note saying congratulations and thank you.

Vitiello: It is key to school improvement. Communication to parents and community is paramount. If the parents and community aren't behind any change, then you likely aren't going to have much success. Celebrate as a whole school. When announcing the state test scores, for example, give kudos to the kindergarten teachers as well as the 3rd and 4th grade teachers. We're all in this together. Take pride in student work. Every bulletin board should reflect the kind of learning going on in classrooms. I'm less interested in seeing a snowman, unless it's kindergarten, then I am a writing piece or a poem or something that students can be proud of and know that their schoolwide peers are taking notice.

Weigel: Celebrations are very important. One of my favorite ways to recognize people for outstanding work is to write a personal note. I write personal birthday cards to all my staff members. One of my assistant principals, who was a teacher for several years, said she's kept every note that I had ever written to her. When students and staff do well, I tell them over the public address system. We also celebrate with ice cream socials, pizza parties, award ceremonies, and pep rallies.

One of my favorite ways to recognize people for outstanding work is to write a personal note.

9. What characteristics do you look for in job candidates?

Hiring Staff

Barnhart: There has to be a passion and excitement in the person's voice when he/she talks about teaching. A positive expression and a smiling face are important. I share my expectations with the job applicant and then ask the candidate to talk with a teacher in the building about school expectations. I asked the staff member to share the good and the bad. The candidate then has an opportunity to talk with me again. I want to see that the candidate understood the demands and expectations.

I look for people who talk about students more than they talk about themselves.

Gunderman: In interviews, I look for people who talk about students more than they talk about themselves. I like to hear them talk about how to engage students. I ask, "Tell me a lesson that was great and how did you know it was great. Tell me about a lesson that bombed and you did about it" There are some people who can't seem to think about a lesson that bombed. That tells me they weren't really tuned in to their students. We all have lessons that fall flat. Look for people who reflect on their practices, are flexible, have a clear laser focus on what is important in the classroom, and are willing to try different methods. People who come in thinking that they are already the best teacher are never the people I want to hire.

I want to see prospective teachers demonstrate that they care about kids.

Hansen: I want to see prospective teachers demonstrate that they care about kids. I need to know who they are as people. My philosophy is that what we do in teaching is a reflection of who we are as people. Teachers need to have passion and be able to tell me why they want to be a teacher. As far as abilities, they need to have leadership abilities. To be a teacher you need to be a good leader. Organization is huge. They have to have a presence. They have to be able to command respect and have a presence, especially in middle school. Are they willing and able to learn? Do they have an attitude that will take direction and ask for help if they need it? They have to be reflective about what they do and what they think.

The last item on my list is content knowledge. That is probably the least important to me. More important are those abilities to facilitate learning, leadership, and all of those things.

Latson: I'm looking for the fire in their eyes and the passion for teaching. A teacher can learn how to teach, but it is harder to learn how to care. I'm looking for the teacher who will do what needs to be done to reach his or her students. If he or she can't relate to the students, what is being taught is lost. All new teachers are going to need help with teaching, and I can help with that, but I can't instill in a teacher the desire, the caring, and the fire for teaching.

Summers: I look for someone who has "fire in the belly". I can almost see it the moment they walk in. I look for someone who is confident and says the word passion. I want to hear that word. I want someone who can truly talk about best practices, who is up on current trends, and is well read. I don't mind seeing a teacher crying in interviews. Not boo-hoo,

but someone who feels emotion when they talk about someone who has touched their lives.

What is important to me is people who can convey in the interview the relationships they have with their students. It's loving the children, connecting with the parents, being a team player and being willing to learn. Most of my questions, honestly, are about getting a glimpse into their heart and character and soul.

I do have the children help me interview. I think that's something that we do that is a little unique. I have a team of teachers that first help me interview. After that interview I have children from the grade level with the opening interview the teacher. All of that is very unrehearsed because it is part of our leadership model. The children get many opportunities to see interviews in action. It's their turn to practice interviewing. It's amazing the conversations that come out of the children's interviews. Their questions are right on the money. They'll ask, "What do you do when someone doesn't bring in their homework?"

Szachowicz: I look for energy, enthusiasm, commitment to urban education, and ways in which the candidate talks about students. I also listen for what I don't want to hear, such as blaming students or the parents for underachievement. In addition, I listen for a sense of humor. I want to know that teachers can make students laugh once in a while so the classroom seems like a pleasant place to be. They should know the content standards, but, to me, the personal qualities come first. Students don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

Vitiello: The most important thing I'm looking for in an interview, usually a team interview, is that the person pauses to think about an answer before giving it. This tells me that this person is reflective and for me that is really key. Candidates should ask good questions. They should portray themselves as a team player and give good examples of how they participated on a team. I want to see someone who is interested in being mentored and in continuing education; someone who can boast of their strengths but is honest about things that challenge them.

Weigel: I have to be careful because human nature says that we end up hiring people exactly like ourselves. I don't want any clones of me. I can't even manage myself, so I don't hire clones anymore. In the past three years, new staff have been hired by other staff members, such as

I want to see someone who is interested in being mentored and in continuing education.

assistant principals and administrative staff. If a staff member is leaving the job and is well respected, nine times out of ten they are going to sit in on the interview for the replacement. The people around that position might also be the ones doing the interview. When we were looking for a band director, we introduced the top candidates to the athletic director, the football coach, and everyone else who interacts with the band director, to make sure that everyone can get along.

Working with Unions and Contracts

10. What is the advice for school leaders who want to make change toward school improvement when there is a strong union and restrictive teacher contracts?

Barnhart: I have not worked with unions, but I have had many meetings over the years with teachers and their representatives and attorneys. I approached the teacher improvement process with the belief that all can be successful with support and training. I document this process before I develop a growth plan. Provide as much help as possible. Believe that people will be successful.

Gunderman: I have worked in a New York school district where there was a strong union presence, restrictions on teacher time, and rules about when teachers could be asked to take training and other activities. Working here in Georgia, there are no unions. I would say that in looking at both situations, we should focus not on what we're asking teachers to do, but on the results that we are committed to as a school. Rather than focusing on "You will train once a month and come to this meeting," put the focus on what we're trying to accomplish with students. Then collectively figure out how we are going to get there. Focus on the desired results by looking at the data and then collaboratively come up with the process of getting there, instead of starting out with "You will do this" and "You will do that."

Hansen: Involve them and make union representatives a part of your leadership team. Our union president for the district is in my building and she has been part of the leadership team since I came here. That was on purpose. We sought her out and asked if she would be part of it because she is influential and is an opinion leader. You want all the players to be involved when making important changes. The unions exist because they want a say in what is happening. They need a say and should be given the opportunity. I really believe that educators, if given the opportunity,

will do the right thing. If we give them all the information, pose the right questions, and frame the problem in a way that they can see it, then they'll come up with good solutions and generally they'll make personal sacrifices to do it.

Latson: My first advice is to understand the teacher contract inside and out and have a relationship with your union. My teachers affectionately call me the "contract god," because I can quote page, section, and article of the contract. It's a respect issue. They understand that I respect a working contract, and there are rules that must be followed. I also understand that we can't get everything done by working to the contract. I allow them the leeway and ability to negotiate. If there are areas that I know can be negotiated, I ask what we can do to provide for the students without violating the contract. If we are going to deviate, it will be by mutual agreement.

Administrators must work on their relationships with the union. There have been times when I've called on the union to help me deal with their members. It was a shock to a number of teachers, but I intend to be fair and honest and work *with* the union. I have found that when we have tough issues, for the most part, the union will support fair educational practices. Our intent should be to be known as an ally who is not seeking an adversarial relationship. We should learn the contract and abide by it. It will give you some headaches but in the long run, you'll have a better school and situation, built on respect for the contractual rights of others.

Summers: My advice would be to always do what is right by the children. If that means that you stay a little later because that is what it will take, you do it because that is what is right for the children. You have to let your heart guide what is the right thing to do by the children and make the children the center of every decision you make. You'll know what the right thing to do is whether you live in a union state or not. I think good teachers do that. They always put the needs of the children first and foremost.

Szachowicz: We have, by contract, two faculty meetings a month and they used to be wasted time. The housemaster would stand up and make three announcements about fire drills and halls and everyone would run away. The administrative and restructuring team said we need to train people; when can we do it? We have those two meetings a month.

I really believe that educators, if given the opportunity, will do the right thing.

Always put the needs of the children first and foremost.

So instead of calling them faculty meetings, we called them literacy workshops. We, the Restructuring Committee, took them over.

If I, as principal, think it's important enough, I have to do what I have to. For example, we have to train all of our new teachers in our literacy initiative. If we don't, the initiative is pointless. That's a lot of catch-up training that we have to do every year. But to me it's worth it.

I can't make somebody stay after school because that would create a grievance. Even if the teacher wouldn't grieve it, the union would with a class action grievance. So we use the time during the day. I'll pull them out of their administrative duty or out of a class. So you use the contract you have and be as creative as you can within the constraints of it. I have a good working relationship with the union because everybody is happy. There are all kinds of benefits and everyone is proud. But, that wasn't always the case.

Vitiello: Make union leaders and representatives part of the process. Invite them to all meetings. Make sure that as a building leader you consult all union contracts and all written documents so that you know going in what you are up against. Make sure they are participating and try to anticipate those who would block what may be happening in your building. Don't take it as a personal affront but as something that is good. It is good that there are people to ask those tough questions. It helps clarify some things you perhaps haven't thought of before.

Weigel: Don't let the contract be a reason for you not to step up. You can still follow your contracts and make a difference. You have to have the determination to say that you're not going to take anything less than what is right for the students. Our union is extremely strong. Every step we take they are pushing behind making sure that you are following the contract.

It is good that there are people to ask those tough questions.

Serving All Students Well

11. How can schools make sure they still meet the needs of academically talented students while they are focusing on students who are not meeting standards?

Barnhart: Training! Lessons with depth and complexity can be differentiated to meet the needs of all students. Time is the critical factor.

There must be a re-teach plan in the schedule so that students who are not meeting standards can receive help while the academically talented students are challenged. I paid teachers to tutor during their planning period and before and after school.

Gunderman: When we look at our goal for all of our students – talented, challenged, those in the middle – we're looking for opportunities we can provide them to gain the skills they are going to need in the 21st century workplace and life outside of school. In doing that, we need to focus on how we can get all of the students to work collaboratively rather than separating them in groups.

The Rigor/Relevance Framework, with its focus on performance, is such a great equalizer for students who are academically strong (those who can memorize and take paper-and-pencil tests) but may not know how to apply their knowledge, as well as those who have had a rockier path in their education and don't test as well, but are still smart and can perform.

When we look at rigor, relevance, and performance-based instruction and assessment, I think we really are equalizing the playing field for all students, because the talent of being able to memorize and recall isn't as important as being able to perform and show what one really knows.

Hansen: In a small school where there aren't the teacher resources to provide the gifted programs, we have to differentiate. We have to know our kids and have that personal relationship with them. But it is difficult. One way we try to get around it is our advisory program.

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We meet every day to make sure every one of our students is known well and they are coming to us with proper clothing, are being fed, and are OK socially. All students in the school that are able have an advisory. We check their grades and if they are doing well they have the opportunity to go to an enrichment activity for the rest of that week. We assign them to something such as guitar, or it might be an enrichment lesson in geometry where we are really going to challenge them; it's up to the advisor. If students are struggling, they are assigned to tutoring. Advisory has helped make sure we are meeting every student's need regardless of ability.

Latson: First, teachers have to realize that they aren't meeting the needs of academically talented students just because the children are getting A's or are performing well on state testing. We must try to raise expectations by looking closely at our top students. Teachers can use pretesting to identify, within each unit, where the top student is in that lesson. They can then build lessons around the top students. Next, they can differentiate that lesson for those who are below the top level. This will set individual goals for a variety of levels and help students aspire to the appropriate level. Often, we don't show students where we want them to be. We tell them they have to be there but they don't where "there" is. When they can see what it looks like, they can figure out what they are shooting for.

Some people say, "Teach to the middle and you'll get those on either end." But if you teach to the top, you will bring the others to that level. We think it is a better way of meeting the needs of all students and not just letting the needs of the academically talented student population flat line like they've done for so many years.

You have to look at the framework through the lens of rigor for that child.

Summers: I think it is really the beauty of the rigor, relevance, and relationship model. It forces you to think about providing rigor for all students and recognize where they are currently performing. That has been the real revelation for our staff. You can plan what you think is a very rigorous activity but it may not be rigorous for the brightest child in your classroom. You have to look at the framework through the lens of rigor for that child, relevance for that child, and real-world for all children. It has forced us to take a look at that population of children.

It is the most challenging, I think, for the teacher to design instruction for the very gifted. I think at A.B. Combs we feel a huge obligation to make sure we are meeting their needs. We bring in the resources to help us. I think asking for help and meeting the needs of the academically gifted have been the biggest hurdles our staff have had to jump. The most painful thing, I think for us, was analyzing the work that we asked children to do and seeing that we weren't meeting the needs of all. It is very interesting to look at the test scores and to see that your brightest kids aren't making the same kind of growth the other children are making. Those are conversations that are happening in our professional learning communities every week.

Szachowicz: We have students who get perfect scores on SATs. Then we have a huge 38% of our students who struggle because they don't speak English as their first language. You have to pay attention to both groups. There are literacy objectives that all students need to master. Our literacy initiative, which crosses all content areas, is our core learning. There are no two ways about it. Everyone needs to master it.

The second issue deals with stretch learning, which is outlined in the International Center's Learning Criteria to Support 21st Century Learners. You have to stretch students to new levels of learning or they aren't going to be motivated and you'll lose them.

We have put in place programs that address the needs of all students. For example, we have AP and International Baccalaureate classes for the academically geared students. We have an A+ certification program for students who want to focus on technology. We also have a virtual high school. We have a huge elective program, which includes art and music courses, which I would never sacrifice. It's all about allowing students to find something they can connect to.

Vitiello: That is always such a challenge. We are fixated, especially in New York State schools, because of the pressure, real or imagined, that teachers and building administrators feel about students who are not making the grade on state tests. For me, it is critically important to keep the balance for those students that need the challenge, to provide some form of rigor. We need to identify interests and talents and make those experiences available to kids. The staff needs to have confidence in what kids already know and push the envelope. That is true for those kids that may be delayed; raise the level of the water so that the boat goes up for everybody.

The staff needs to have confidence in what kids already know and push the envelope.

Weigel: I find that student-to-student tutoring is much more powerful than staff tutoring. The idea is to teach to the highest levels of student learning. Then, when it comes time for review as part of your lessons, you put the students in groups and let them teach each other. I don't see it as just a problem. I see it as an opportunity to build partnerships and relationships in areas we would have never thought possible. We found that when all levels of students are mixed together in groups, those students who were seen struggling with class work did much better because they were taught by the general curriculum and honors students in their group.

Getting Started

12. With so many issues to address, where do you start? What do you tackle first?

Barnhart: Begin with people. Know and support teachers and students. Share the vision, plan and implement the strategies with them, and evaluate the results. Make changes as necessary.

Gunderman: It's critical to have a clear, concise vision for your school. Back in the 1980s, when we first started doing mission statements, they were two pages long and nobody could remember what they said. Once the vision is established, strategies and goals to support that vision fall into place. As I said before, everything you do has to support the school's vision.

Hansen: I think that you start by selecting a leadership team and build that group so that they trust one another. When building a leadership team, don't just pick the "yes" people. Pick the people who have influence on the staff. One way I suggest you do that is to take them on a trip to visit other schools. Go out of town to be together and talk together and frame the vision. The next thing, probably simultaneously, is to build a school vision that all people have a say in.

You also have to frame what your challenges are. You have to attend to what is going well and to what is happening that is keeping us from reaching this vision. In my mind, it is better to do something wrong then not to do anything at all. You have to start moving. I think that a lot of time we get into planning mode. We like to plan but you just have to start doing.

Latson: I start with the issues that are going to have the greatest effect on staff and student morale. If you let morale drop, you will increase the number of issues that you have. A happy staff and happy students tend not to have so many issues. It has worked for me. If there are some glaring issues that need to be addressed, deal with those. But, I will put dealing with morale problems first.

I think you have to go slow so that you can go fast later on.

Summers: I think you have to go slow so that you can go fast later on. You have to build a culture with common language, shared vision, and mission. The first thing you do is know what you stand for. Create a vision

that is exciting, is going propel your school forward; have a mission that is aligned with that; and make the children the center of everything you do. Make every decision in the best interest of the children. That has really guided us as we made A.B. Combs.

We had to learn that doing a lot of initiatives at one time gets you nowhere. Once your vision and mission are clear, you begin to add things that are aligned with your foundation, your vision, and your mission. Since we built our vision very little has changed because we know that all of it aligned together. That is what is helping us succeed. You have to find out what is right for your school, keep children at the center, and build slowly so you can go fast later on.

Szachowicz: The first thing I would do is get a small group of people together and look at all the accessible data about your school. In Massachusetts, we get excellent Massachusetts College Admission Test data. Schools can focus on SAT scores or grade distribution. Data gives you the justification to make changes. Data that is honestly evaluated is like holding up a mirror.

We had to do this because our scores were so bad across the board. We picked open-response writing because we felt it would give us the biggest bang for the buck down the line. It meant making a tough decision. It meant saying we put math improvement initiatives on hold for a bit.

Vitiello: In my view, it is the climate in the building. You can start with very small steps. It doesn't have to be large. It doesn't have to be expensive or time consuming. It can be very small steps. I think of Rudy Giuliani and Times Square. He was a believer in taking care of small things and it will be a whole lot easier to do the bigger things later.

Weigel: You need to figure out what the school's biggest problem is and focus on that first. You can do this by surveying staff, students, and all the other stakeholders and ask what they think needs to be done to make the school better. I don't think there is an administration or school out there that does not know what its problems are, but surveys put the ownership with the wider community and not just with the principal.

You need to figure out what the school's biggest problem is and focus on that first.

When we moved into a new building, we noticed that our prospective 9th grade students were tearing up our middle schools. We knew we needed

to do something that would change the culture in the new high school. We drilled them on expectations and worked as a school community to implement consistency. Rather than always being punitive, we put staff and students in teams much like the middle school. This initiative was so successful in 9th grade that the students wanted it to extend to 10th grade. We also listened to the students when they suggested changes to make the initiative more effective.

Avoiding Burnout

13. How do you prevent teacher burnout that results from the demands for time and effort in making changes?

Barnhart: The master schedule in a high school must be planned to support teachers. Team time, team planning, minimal preparations, time for meetings, and tutoring must occur during the school day as much as possible so that staff have personal time off. Staff should be paid for after-school work. This should be a budget priority. I spend time with staff so I am aware of issues that are causing difficulties. There must be opportunities for staff to informally talk with me so I have some knowledge of problems they are facing.

Gunderman: I've worked with teachers in some very challenged urban schools and I would never lose a teacher because the work was too hard. I would lose teachers because of a wounded spirit. They would say, "I just can't work this hard for no results anymore." So I think to prevent teacher burnout is to give the teachers the resources they need to be productive in the classroom. The potential of burnout for the good teachers isn't in working too hard but working hard on the wrong stuff. Teachers need as much time as possible within the school day for collaborating with their colleagues and meeting with administrators. I made a commitment to my staff that I would never waste their time in a meeting and I will know what they are doing in their classes. In saying that, all administrative actions were done through email and in writing. We reserved the time we had together as a staff for talking about teaching and learning.

Hansen: I think the first thing is celebrating. If you look at the data and the results, that is very rewarding. People will do a lot. They will work harder and they will do much more than we probably expect if they feel successful, if they feel their efforts are being recognized, and that they are making a difference. That's why we all became teachers. We wanted to make a difference.

The potential of burnout for the good teachers isn't in working too hard but working hard on the wrong stuff.

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The second thing is that we have to have our “do not do” lists. We have to take some things off of teachers’ plates. I make an effort to shelter them from some of the frivolous things. Don’t send people to training you know is poor or is a one-shot deal. Sometimes we get pressure to participate in the latest and greatest programs, professional development, or other meetings that don’t really fit with where we are headed. If it doesn’t fit in with where our ship is headed, I’m sorry, we aren’t going to do that. I think the principal has to stand up sometimes and say we aren’t going to do that right now. We are headed in another direction and we can’t take that on right now.

One of the things that is a huge focus in our school is relationships. To model that, I try to build relationships with the teachers; try to get to know them and build collaborative relationships among all staff. We have lunch once in a while and we don’t talk about school. I just get to know them. People appreciate that type of thing. We’ve created a culture of collaboration and through that collaboration strong relationships have developed. If people have a good working environment where they have good relationships with people, they’ll endure a lot of the challenges.

Latson: As an administrator I have to make sure I don’t contribute to the burnout problem. There are a lot of tasks that burn teachers out. They have it tough enough with having to meet the needs of all the students, but when the administrative tasks start piling up, many teachers start to focus on that. My secretarial staff and I try to come up with ways to decrease the amount of paperwork the teachers have to do. If I can eliminate some tasks, that is a big way to prevent teacher burnout.

As an administrator
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burnout problem.

When I see that teachers are having a hard time or have had a hard year, we really watch how we schedule them. I say to the teachers very clearly, “You had a tough year last year; where can I place you in your area where you would be the most comfortable and have time to recuperate?” I’ll make those changes, perhaps moving them to an area they have not taught but would love to. This year I took a math teacher and put him in TV production, because he had been grinding the last six years with the lowest 25% of students. He’s now getting rejuvenated.

Summers: It’s really tricky. I can only relate to my leadership and how I’m constantly working on it. There was an “aha” moment for me about eight years ago. I had to say I work for them. Nobody works for me. I work for the teachers. My job is to get them whatever they feel they need to do

their job well. I have to support them and be there for them. I must know them so well that when I see them looking down or feeling overwhelmed I go in to rescue them. I see my job as a rescuer, as a provider, as an encourager, as a motivator. Everything that I do is about how I can better support them. I talk to them, have lunch with them, take them away from the campus to do planning. Those kinds of things truly do help.

I think you have to create systems where teachers have time to plan and collaborate with one another and sit back and reflect.

I think you have to create systems where teachers have time to plan and collaborate with one another and sit back and reflect. This is not an easy place to work. It is very demanding. There are high expectations. I never ask them to do anything I wouldn't do myself. Knowing your staff well and honoring the work they do help prevent some of the burnout.

Szachowicz: One good way to prevent burnout is to show teachers what they are doing to make a difference. We do that by feeding back the improvement data. It can be small. You only need to pick up something. We present assessment scores during full faculty meetings. It's hard manipulating and presenting the data. We work a long time to be sure that the information is accessible and powerful to people. But, this takes time and you do it bit by bit. Again, I'm going to say target and focus. That's what made the difference for us.

Vitiello: Not doing too much too soon. Let teachers know that you appreciate what they do, that you know that they work hard and it is a difficult job but you support them. For new teachers, make sure that you check in with them. Don't close the door and let them be isolated with four walls and 24 kids all day. Make sure that people know that if they have something to celebrate they can come to you. Also, if they have something they feel challenged with they can get some help.

Weigel: You need to talk to them. At the end of the year, we ask the teachers what they want to teach. Some 9th and 10th grade teachers get tired because the FCAT looms over them and they need a break from that. On the other hand, there are people who have been educators for 40 years and they act with the same enthusiasm as they did in their first few years.

You need to celebrate their successes and do special things to let them know you appreciate them. If they are having hard times or melting down at times, you need to make sure that your door is always open so that they can talk to you no matter what the problem is.

Using Data

14. How do you recognize good data that will help improve teaching and learning?

Barnhart: First of all, the curriculum must be known and understood. Standards and instructional best practices must be known by the people delivering the instruction. Assessment must be aligned and disaggregated. Data must include an item analysis for each student if it is to be used to help students or teachers improve. Review the questions, study student answers, and understand what needs to be re-taught. Determine which teacher taught the objective well, share the strategy, assess again, and review results.

Gunderman: I asked my staff – especially the department chairs who understood the standards of each course – what data do we receive that really tells us how our students are performing and that we can tie to our individual teaching practices. So the first step is finding a standardized test that we have faith in. We also encourage students to tell us what they have learned in a course and add this to the data-gathering process.

Hansen: I think that a lot of schools are data rich but information poor. We have all of the test scores, benchmark assessments, and very specific hard achievement data, but sometimes it is soft data about our culture and relationships that is important to school improvement. It has certainly made a difference in our school. For example, this month's theme is respect. The reason is we surveyed our students and one of the areas of concern was respect. So we are working on this in our student leadership groups, our positive behavior cabinet, and our advisory cabinet.

I think that a lot of schools are data rich but information poor.

We don't have resources in our district to generate a lot of data. The data we are paying attention to and are generating is what we want to know. Specifically, we have data teams whereby each curriculum team meets once a week and goes through the latest common assessment. They all give the team-created common assessment on the same day. So every unit taught has a common assessment. They select the day they are going to give it, grade it the same way, and they compare data class-to-class. Then, once a month the data teams meet with me, go through their data, and show me what their class averages are. We go through a series of questions to chart their data, to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses as a group and as individuals, and identify the students who need extra time and support or enrichment. They assign those students according to their needs.

Latson: If it improves teaching and learning it improves good data. Teachers really have a hard time interpreting data. I do a lot of data interpretation for my teachers because I know they have difficulty and limited time. I sit down with the teachers at the beginning of the year and we do goal setting based upon data. In Palm Beach County we have almost too much data; we don't know what to do with it. I try to help teachers focus their goals on specific data. I try to align it to what they understand and later bring in different types of data that show them how it correlates to what they were doing.

Summers: We've really had to grow in that area. We went from having a notebook that was two inches thick and thinking how great it is, to recognizing that you have to know what you are going to do with this stuff before you ever begin to collect it. Our data notebooks now aren't nearly as massive as when we first got started. We've learned that less is more. I think we know now that what we are collecting is truly moving our school and children forward.

Teachers are comfortable asking and reflecting, "What is this data telling us?" Teachers are able to look and say, "Wow, this data shows I do not know how to teach this strategy and main idea. Can somebody help me?" Teachers have to have that trusting relationship with their colleagues. They used to hold this stuff close to their chest. Now it is out for everyone to see. Conversations that occur around the data are the greatest gifts from the process. I think you have to have a lot of questions to ask and then know what to do when those questions are answered.

We focus the most on the student performance data and look at school trends student by student.

Szachowicz: We focus almost exclusively on student performance data. I know that schools look at other data that relates to suspension and attendance rates, but it almost gets overwhelming. So, we focus the most on the student performance data and look at school trends student by student. We ask questions such as, "Are there groups of students that are not performing well?" You look at subgroups all the time with AYP. While we might be doing well as a school, we have to ask ourselves, "Are there students in a particular category who aren't succeeding?" We saw that a few years ago with our special education students, so we put in place a portfolio system. We also have a good walkthrough tool to assess if those things that we just trained ourselves on are in place.

Vitiello: The key word is good data. That is always a challenge because everything depends on the expectations of your state, your school district, and certainly what your expectations are as a school. Look at formative and summative tests from vendors that are group- developed and grade-level developed. Take the tests apart. You find out what they are asking, why they are asking it, and have teachers take the test. Every couple of years we would take the state test at faculty meetings. We would then talk about the items and how they were asked, so that even our kindergarten teachers could start with listening activities, for example.

Every couple of years we would take the state test at faculty meetings.

Weigel: Our school has an education data warehouse that gives us specific information on students from the time they begin school. The important thing, though, is that we sift through this data. We have to keep in mind what is relevant. In our state the only thing that matters is FCAT. We are bombarded with information from this exam. We also know that there is other data that is just as important, if not more so, than FCAT data. We sat down and asked what the data was and how we were going to look for it. For us, what's most important is the graduation rate, the promotion rate from one grade to the next, a student's GPA, the passing rate, and the attendance rate.

We also have the districtwide Gold Report, which comes out quarterly and gives us all of this information on students in upper-level classes. You need to go to your district and see what kind of data it is using. If it is not using relevant data, then something has to be done about that. The pitfall is using poor data to try to make good decisions — a waste of time.

15. What strategies can be used to develop future teacher and administrative leaders in schools?

Barnhart: Help people learn to lead. Provide them with opportunities to practice. Give them a school problem and have them develop solutions.

Gunderman: The key is delegating leadership roles to teachers who are enthusiastic and want to take a more active role in the school's initiatives. As I said before, there are a handful of superstars who from day one are out there performing like crazy. Recognizing their hard work and giving them some autonomy to share with their colleagues and lead in that way gives them more confidence in what they are doing.

Developing Future Leaders

Also, you should talk to new teachers. Some time ago I was talking to one teacher about her test scores and student profiles when the six-week report card came out. She said, "I'm so glad I've had a chance to talk to you because I have not talked to you since I was hired 18 months ago."

After that, I started meeting with every new teacher. I would set up 20-minute individual meetings and asked: "How is it going?" "Is the job what you expected?" "How can we better support you in the classroom?" "What questions or concerns do you have?" These meetings helped new teachers develop confidence and allowed them to feel that they had a voice in the overall direction of the school.

Hansen: I think this is one of most overlooked things that administrators do. We have to tell teachers they are leaders. I've told my staff they are "leaders of learning," and if I could change their job titles that is what I would change it to. Teaching is about learning and ensuring that students learn. The specific reason for changing from the leadership team to the cabinets was to empower many in particular areas. Cabinets will meet, frame the problem, and come up with a solution. They will ask for professional development time so that they can present the new initiatives to the whole staff; they come up with the accountability measures. I generally help a little in their process to ensure we are still working within our vision. I help by asking a lot of questions. But generally they come up with the plans and carry them out. It is amazing to watch how the staff react to them rather than reacting to me. They've seen me on the soap box a million times. They don't need to see me again.

Empower them with assignments. Create accountability, a return-and-report model, and then trust them. Tell them what you want done, let them go, support them, and ask questions. Don't solve their problems, but ask the questions that you hope will help them see what they have to see.

In developing teachers, there is such a disconnect between what they were taught and what they actually need.

Latson: In developing teachers, there is such a disconnect between what they were taught and what they actually need. Teacher preparation programs are preparing teachers to teach students as they were in the 1970s and 1980s. Students today are very different from those students. We also need to think about how we place student teachers. When new teachers come out of a teacher preparation program with exposure to a certain type of school, and they get students in their first job that don't fall into that mold, they panic. Leaders, as well, need experience in every type of school.

You have to let prospective teachers get out there and do it – real practice. If you don't experience something, you don't know where the weaknesses are. You don't know how you are going to react. There needs to be a lot of situational learning throughout teacher training. I have two teachers who want to be administrators. I try to give them on-the-job training. I brought the teachers in and we discussed the roles they could take on when both of my assistant principals were out.

Teachers need the skills to deal with every child. I think teacher preparation courses and ongoing training need to be changed to meet the needs of today's population.

Summers: It is my goal that everyone has an opportunity to develop. Within the team everyone serves as a coach of some curriculum or initiative. They are getting the preparation in their committee work to one day sit on the leadership team with me. We believe strongly that everyone needs to feel like a leader in something. This includes the students as well as the teachers.

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Szachowicz: We use our Restructuring Committee to encourage and develop future teacher leaders. This committee trains all of our teachers. The committee is made up largely of teachers, so we have teachers teaching other teachers, which is powerful because trainers and trainees can really relate to one another's work.

I'm also a strong believer in the walk-a-mile-in-my-shoes training. We have a system-wide administrative leadership program in which teachers, at the expense of the district because substitutes have to be hired, are given the opportunity to shadow and work with an administrator from April to the end of the year.

Vitiello: I think it really behooves districts to cultivate those students in high school who might have an interest in teaching. Provide opportunities to work in school buildings, to volunteer, to perhaps mentor or tutor younger students. I think it is really critical. Once I was an elementary building administrator I took every opportunity I could to have high school kids come down to our building to work in any capacity with our students. They could see first-hand what it was like in a classroom and how kids operated, so in their minds they could formulate what might be good for them.

I think school districts and administrators need to support potential administrative candidates. They need to be positive in the things they say and how they portray administration. Not that they shouldn't be honest to say that it's difficult work, time consuming, and labor intensive, but incredibly rewarding.

Weigel: You have to view teachers as leaders from the onset. Nobody likes anything better than to be tapped on the shoulder, invited to lead, and be able to say, "I'm a teacher leader and the principal just asked me take a leadership role." I have not had a single person that I have tapped on the shoulder say that they do not want to participate in a leadership role. I think the personal touch is really important.

Moving from Good to Great

The turning point for our school was when the students became more involved in their own learning.

16. When do you know that your school is moving from good to great?

Barnhart: The student performance data and the relationships between adults and students are the determining factors. All are observable and give a true picture of the culture of the school. Success is visible as you walk into a classroom or down the hall.

Gunderman: The turning point for our school was when the students became more involved in their own learning. When we trained our students to know what rigor and relevance mean in Quadrant D learning and they could recognize the practices, the conversation on school improvement opened up to include them. That took us to another level. They realized that instruction wasn't something we were doing to them; it was something we were doing with them. Once the students knew the expectation for their learning, teachers felt more compelled to meet those expectations.

Hansen: It will hopefully continue to show over the years that we are making improvement and that we will continue to make improvement. I have a better sense of when we are not going to continue to improve. That would probably be when we quit asking questions and quit striving to be better; when we think we've arrived. I have an amazing school. My staff is an amazing group of people that does amazing things but we aren't there yet. We aren't even close.

Latson: My students let me know. I've found the biggest barometer of what your school is doing is being out and about with the students. I can say it is wonderful. My teachers can say it is wonderful. But if our clientele, the students, say it's not wonderful, it's not. That's part of the reason I want the student leadership group. Students can give us a barometer of what is happening. I like to sit with the students and ask them questions. "How are your teachers?" "How are we doing?" "What do we need to change?" The students are honest, and if you are willing to listen, they will tell you.

Good to great is a perception in my mind. Test scores can indicate different things, but there is a lot more to school than the test scores. You have to measure success from your clientele; I know when my students tell me.

Summers: You feel it. You see it. You have the data to back it. We've gone through some peaks and valleys through the years. With our school being in some kind of spotlight the questions are always about why did you dip this year? When we embraced rigor and relevance with project-based learning two years ago, it was a turning point for us. We saw a level of excitement and enthusiasm from the teachers and the students such as we hadn't seen in a while. We stayed in that implementation just long enough to get the breakthrough performance we got last year. I think great is what you are always striving to be; there is still room to grow.

When we embraced rigor and relevance with project-based learning two years ago, it was a turning point for us.

I believe in celebrating and staying in that spot just long enough to feel great. But I stayed in that spot for too long several years ago. I thought we were sustaining performance when in actuality we were spiraling downward. You can not ever rest on your laurels. Not when it comes to doing what is right for children. I feel like we will never be at the level of great. We will strive for it always but I never want to think we are there because that is when we stop growing.

Szachowicz: Let me start with when we finally felt good, because we weren't even thinking "great." We were thinking, "Please let some of our students pass." When we first launched the writing initiative we had no idea if it was going to work. We were nervous. We presented a public face of confidence, but behind the scenes we were hoping it would work.

We knew we were on the right track, though, when we got the information from the commissioner's office saying that the school had reduced the student failure rate from 44% to 23% in one year. The next year the failure rate went to 14%. We knew for certain that we went from failing to good when the commissioner came to the school and said, "You are a school of champions in a city of champions. You are the most improved high school in the state."

I don't think a school can ever become "great," or "the best." I think you keep aspiring to that end and you keep running in that direction, but as long as even one student is failing, no school is great. But, here's what moved us to the next level. Once we got a handle on how to move the students from failing to passing, our next mission was how to get them to score the best grades possible. So we undertook a school-wide initiative on analyzing different reading abilities.

What happened as a result of this initiative was not just the reduction in the failure rate, but a tremendous increase in the number of students reaching proficiency and advanced levels of reading. After this initiative was in place, our school had the largest number of students in the state who received the Adams Scholarship, which are based on outstanding MCAT performances. The scholarship provides four years of tuition at any state college or university.

Vitiello: I'd like to think that it is when people move into your neighborhood because your school has a good reputation and they want their children to attend your school. It has less to do about you personally and more to do about the reputation of the school community.

In reality, it is
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improvement.

In reality, it is a never-ending evolution of improvement. To say that you are moving to great, you should celebrate, but there is no resting on your laurels. You must always be moving forward.

Weigel: When we asked every student what he or she wanted to do after graduation, that was a turning point for us. Based on student responses, we restructured our career academies. And, we will restructure them again if they don't work for the next group of students.

It's a great feeling when I stand out in the school courtyard and see my students eagerly going to class. But the real moment for me — when I knew that, as a school, we truly were at a new level — was when I realized that we started with 656 freshmen and now have 646 juniors. We used to lose 180-220 in between the freshman and junior year. That's a testament in itself.



Chapter 4

Creating a Context for Instructional Leadership

Address Context First

Challenges that require sustained vigilance are considered “adaptive challenges,” while issues that are resolved through quicker, more definitive action are called “technical challenges.”

Heifetz, R. and Linsky, M. “When Leadership Spells Danger”

This resource kit includes a DVD related to this topic: *Instructional Leadership — Before You Begin*.

The first of the three big approaches to instructional leadership is to address context. *Context* involves looking at the school environment, particularly the staff, the way they work together, and what they think about teaching and learning. If context is not addressed, even the most effective instructional practices will fail.

Instructional leadership is one of a school leader’s most important responsibilities. Unfortunately, it is often neglected. Addressing instruction requires action over a long period of time, but leaders frequently are called upon to attend to more urgent problems. Challenges that require sustained vigilance are considered “adaptive challenges,” while issues that are resolved through quicker, more definitive action are called “technical challenges.” By better understanding how to address instructional leadership as a unique adaptive problem, school leaders can become more effective in supporting staff to deliver the highest quality instruction.

Because technical challenges and adaptive challenges differ fundamentally, addressing them requires two very different approaches. In their work around leadership, Ronald Heifetz and Martin Linsky of the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University describe these types of challenges:

Problems that we can solve through the knowledge of experts are technical challenges. Problems that the experts cannot solve are called adaptive challenges. Solutions to technical problems lie in the head and solving them requires intellect and logic. Solutions to adaptive problems lie in the stomach and the heart and rely on changing people’s beliefs, habits, ways of working, or ways of life.

School leaders constantly are called upon to solve technical challenges. Typical technical challenges include school facility issues, transportation issues, and student behavioral issues. School leaders must address these challenges, but doing so can be time consuming. If not addressed,

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however, technical challenges can have significant impacts on teaching and learning within the school.

One good thing about technical challenges is that often they can be dispatched through set procedures and with limited involvement by others. Generally, success is easy to measure through follow-up observation. In the case of a facilities issue such as a boiler problem, for example, the principal makes a call or two to have the problem addressed and follows up to see that the matter has been resolved. Handling a chronically late school bus might be more involved, but a conversation with the bus driver or transportation director may identify the cause of the problem and enable a solution. The complexity of student behavioral issues vary based on the circumstances, but usually schools have specific guidelines and procedures for handling these situations; an administrator selects the appropriate actions and carries them out with the involvement of the student and and/or parents.

Over time, a leader can use proven procedures, norms, and methods to build expertise in handling technical challenges. A Quadrant A authoritative leadership style is appropriate for addressing these types of issues efficiently. No teams need to be consulted, no meetings are necessary, no consultation is needed, and no additional learning is required. Resolution requires identifying a solution and taking action.

Adaptive challenges are much more complex than technical challenges. There are no specific scripts or steps to follow that result in a quick and easy resolution. Leaders who only see instructional leadership as a series of technical challenges are likely to fail in addressing the larger challenge of persuading people within the system to adopt a change. Heifetz asserts that “the biggest source of failure in leadership is treating adaptive challenges as technical problems.” Clearly, improving instructional leadership is a far more complicated undertaking than ensuring that a school bus arrives on time. As described by Heifetz and Linsky:

Adaptive challenges require experiments, discoveries, and adjustments from many places in the organization or community. To make the adaptive leap to survive in the new environment requires people to learn new ways of behaving and adopt new values and attitudes. Sustaining change requires the people with the problem to internalize the change itself.

Leaders who only see instructional leadership as a series of technical challenges are likely to fail in addressing the larger challenge of persuading people within the system to adopt a change.

Heifetz, R. and Linsky, M. *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive Through the Dangers of Leading*

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Adaptive challenges require a more systemic approach, along with the collaborative leadership style characteristic of Quadrant D.

Adaptive challenges require a more systemic approach, along with the collaborative leadership style characteristic of Quadrant D. Addressing an adaptive challenge — such as instructional improvement — requires significant intervention over a longer period of time using more complex strategies that are intended to change other people's attitudes and behaviors. To find a solution, a leader must empower leadership throughout the organization and cultivate a common vision. The leader must be prepared to consult with others, research, and learn.

In order for an adaptive challenge to be addressed successfully, people within the system must change over time. An adaptive challenge is influenced greatly by the varied beliefs and emotions of the people involved, so addressing the challenge fully requires flexibility. Proposed solutions may have unexpected consequences. Just as a stone thrown into a pond creates ripples that radiate in all directions, so, too, can a leader's efforts to move toward resolution. When a leader attempts to solve an adaptive challenge, he or she should be prepared for a ripple effect to flow throughout the organization.

Since adaptive change involves bringing together people who have different viewpoints, attempts to solve challenges on a schoolwide level may produce a wide range of reactions. Even when they are committed to seeking solutions, various factions of people will worry about the impacts on their own responsibilities. They may lobby for changes in the solution to diminish the effect on their comfort zone of day-to-day work. Even if the leader has the best solution for an adaptive problem, that solution may not be achieved or may be perceived as ineffective, because of the opposition that evolves through attempts at implementation. Consequently, even good solutions often are judged as failures, which is an added burden for leaders attempting to address the adaptive challenge.

Adaptive challenges must be approached in a more systematic manner than technical challenges. Too often, leaders try to implement an instructional practice, such as a professional learning community, in the same manner they might address a technical problem, such as a late school bus. Simply giving directions and laying out expectations will not make it happen. Approaching an adaptive challenge requires a leader to take a wider view of the organization. While successful schools offer lessons about which best practices work and how to implement them, each school is unique. Nonetheless, there are three questions

instructional leaders should consider as they attempt to address an adaptive problem:

1. Which parts of the “organizational DNA” must be altered or discarded in order to achieve the school instruction vision?
2. Which parts of the school’s DNA must be preserved?
3. How will creativity and innovation be stimulated to create a new, more adaptive DNA and school culture?

Of course, not all problems fall neatly into the categories of technical challenge or adaptive challenge. Some aspects of instructional leadership are technical. For example, the process teachers use to select textbooks, the methods used to prepare students for specific exams, or the steps used to create a new course all pose technical challenges. Each of these elements contributes to instructional change; however, the bigger issue of modifying instruction is more adaptive in nature.

To bring about instructional change, instructional leaders must understand the leadership role. This is where the Quadrant D Leadership Framework is essential, because it offers leaders a mental model to guide their daily actions and to think about situational interventions. The next part of the process involves three steps: (1) creating a context for instructional change, which is the focus of this chapter, (2) defining a specific target for instructional change, and (3) developing an array of instructional leadership practices. This three-part process will yield instructional changes that have lasting impacts. This chapter describes how to build context using three strategies: staff relationships, collaboration, and sense of purpose and urgency.

Relationships are the foundation of the context for instructional leadership. A school leader cannot move very far or very fast until strong positive relationships are established and there is a high level of trust. For teachers to make changes in instruction, they must take risks and try new techniques so that school change can develop over time. Teachers are reluctant to take risks unless they have supportive relationships with peers who can encourage them when they try new approaches or are unsuccessful in initial attempts. If teachers do not feel a high level

See Chapter 2 for the Quadrant D Leadership Framework. Chapter 5 focuses on defining a target for instructional change.

Leadership practices are discussed in chapters 6 through 9.

Staff Relationships

A school leader cannot move very far or very fast until strong positive relationships are established and there is a high level of trust.

of trust with a principal or department chairperson, they likely will stick with existing instructional methods, and there will be little change in instruction. This is why context is so important: it sets a foundation within a school community in which instructional innovation can flourish. School leaders must nurture relationships in order to create a positive climate for instructional improvement.

The Relationship Model

Relationships are an essential element in school success. In working with model schools across the nation, the International Center has endeavored to help schools recognize relationships as a viable aspect of school improvement. This work has led to the development of a Relationship Model. A clear taxonomy for relationships enables schools to quantify relationships in a manner similar to how the Knowledge Taxonomy and the Application Model have helped define knowledge and application on the Rigor/Relevance Framework.

The Relationship Model can drive improvement by helping schools connect people to learning.

The Relationship Model can drive improvement by helping schools connect people to learning. The model can be used to describe relationships between and among students, between adults and students, and between and among adults. In this setting, the model is used to describe staff relationships. It describes seven levels of relationships within a collaborative learning community:

Level 0 — Isolation: Staff members perform their work but feel significant isolation from other staff or a lack of frequent feedback from school leaders and others.

Level 1 — Known: Staff members know each other personally, including one another's interests, aspirations, and challenges.

Level 2 — Receptive: Teachers, support staff, and leaders have frequent contact and respect each other's contributions to the school environment. All exhibit behaviors of interest in others.

Level 3 — Reactive: There are many examples of teachers or support staff working together, and staff members consistently and eagerly help when requested.

Level 4 — Proactive: Strong levels of collaboration exist, and there is obvious ongoing commitment to team teaching, mentoring new teachers, and professional development.

Level 5 — Sustained: There is demonstrated, ongoing collaboration from all staff over a significant period of time. New staff members are incorporated into the school culture of collaboration.

Level 6 — Mutually Beneficial: Staff members work as a total community committed to each other and to school goals.

Quantifying Relationships: The *We Survey Suite*

Asking students and staff for feedback about their experiences in school can initiate innovative, meaningful school change. The *We Survey* suite is a straightforward tool to help school leaders gather essential insight about the people who make up their school. The suite includes four surveys, which can be used together or independently. Each survey has 60 items rated on a Likert scale from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.”

The *We Learn* - Student Survey is designed for grades 6 through 12 and asks students to respond to statements related to rigor, relevance, relationships, and leadership. Among other goals, it seeks to determine whether students feel challenged or see the connections between school and the real world. Sample statements include:

- This school has high expectations for all students.
- My teachers present lessons in different ways.
- My teachers know my academic interests and goals.
- Students are involved in important decisions at school.

The *We Teach* - Instructional Staff Survey is for the adults who have a role in teaching and learning in the classroom. This survey is a companion to the *We Learn* surveys so that perceptions of staff and students can be compared. Items also relate to rigor, relevance, relationships, and leadership and include such statements as:

- In my class, students discuss and solve open-ended questions and problems.
- There is strong communication between school administration and staff.

The *We Survey* suite is a straightforward tool to help school leaders gather essential insight about the people who make up their school.

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- I make learning exciting for my students.
- I am a source of encouragement for my students.

The *We Lead* - Whole Staff Survey assesses staff perceptions of the school administration. Items are based on three key elements, which have been identified by the Successful Practices Network as essential aspects of leadership in successful schools. In order for students to reach their full potential, a school must have: (1) a coherent vision, (2) strong instructional leadership, and (3) staff who feel empowered to make decisions on behalf of students. *We Lead* survey statements include:

Successful Practices
Network
www.successfulpractices.org

- I am supported to grow professionally.
- School administrators see me as a leader.
- The school administration creates a climate of trust.
- I am proud of this school.

The *We Support* - Parent/Community Survey is intended for all community members. This survey assesses community perceptions of the school experience as well as the community's expectations of the school system. Sample items include:

- The school system helps students develop healthy attitudes for success in life.
- The school system helps students make informed decisions about post high school plans.
- Students of all abilities are encouraged equally in the district.

Collaboration

Strong leadership is
at the foundation of
strong collaboration.

Schools engage in specific practices to improve the quality of the connections that influence staff collaboration. These practices are divided into two types: (1) *collaborative behaviors* — ways that leaders and staff behave to form good relationships, and (2) *collaborative initiatives* — strategies schools implement to support staff in working together.

Successful collaboration results when values and attitudes are shared among staff, opportunities for collaborative behaviors are nurtured, and collaborative initiatives that encourage cooperative efforts are put in place. Strong leadership is at the foundation of strong collaboration, so school leaders should start by reflecting on their own behaviors and requesting constructive feedback from staff. There are specific initiatives that help to create high levels of staff cooperation, but these are effective only if the school leader has cultivated a collaborative culture.

Collaborative Behaviors

Following is a discussion of seven types of collaborative behaviors.

Showing Respect

Respect is one of the most often cited essential behaviors. In any school community, there are multiple roles for staff. Sometimes, there is an unspoken hierarchy among teachers based on the perceived importance of what they teach. There are certain courses — such as gifted programs, Advanced Placement (AP) courses, or college-level courses — that carry prestige, because they are serving elite students. Teachers may compete to be selected to work in these programs.

All teachers should be respected equally, whether they are providing AP French instruction or basic mathematics skills to struggling learners. School leaders must pay close attention to how they treat each teacher and every staff person in the school. Likewise, it is important to call attention to any disrespectful staff behaviors. Disagreements are natural — in fact, they are integral to the improvement process — but in successful schools, staff are able to disagree and still respect one another.

Frequent Contact, Active Listening, “Being There”

It is difficult, if not impossible, to collaborate with colleagues effectively if one is not present, both physically and mentally. “Being there” means focusing fully on each and every person during personal contact, regardless of other pressures or how trivial a question or concern may seem. School leaders are always busy and have incredible demands on their time. Despite this, they must strive to give each person full attention. Strong leaders encourage this behavior in others, which supports the foundation for improved staff relationships.

Strong leaders model behaviors that support relationship building among staff: focusing fully on others during personal contact, communicating with others frequently, and listening actively. A large part of respecting and supporting staff members is communication. Frequent contact, verbal or written, is essential to collaboration. How staff communicate is established through the administration. Consider how memoranda, meetings, and

Essential Collaborative Behaviors

Showing Respect

Frequent Contact,
Active Listening,
“Being There”

Building Trust

Enthusiasm,
Positive Humor,
Avoiding Put-downs

Identifying and
Encouraging Talents
and Strengths

Celebrating
Accomplishments,
Praising Peers,
Being a Role Model

One-to-One
Communication,
Encouraging Idea
Sharing

Strong leaders model behaviors that support relationship building among staff: focusing fully on others during personal contact, communicating with others frequently, and listening actively.

e-mails can enhance relationships within the school walls. Leaders who are absent or who are perceived to be absent or uninterested are not effective.

Finally, active listening — rephrasing what is heard as a question or opinion to ensure understanding of another's point of view — shows respect and interest, which fosters ongoing, open communication.

With a liberal amount of trust, even the biggest changes glide toward implementation more easily. Without it, friction dominates.

Building Trust

Trust is a fundamental element in effective organizational change. Think of trust as a lubricant: With a liberal amount of trust, even the biggest changes glide toward implementation more easily. Without it, friction dominates; every little movement becomes a struggle and progress is slow.

Steven Covey, noted leadership and personal skill speaker and author, points out that to build trust among others, you must first trust yourself. He describes self-trust as credibility. Increasing one's credibility means renewing a focus on integrity, intent, capabilities, and results. Integrity is more than being honest; it is "walking the talk" and acting in a manner that is consistent with the delivered message. Self-trust also is about building competence and getting results.

Covey has identified 13 behaviors characteristic of highly trusted leaders:

1. **Talk straight:** Trusted leaders are honest and straightforward in all conversations, avoid false flattery, do not talk behind others' backs, and do not hold back information or attempt to spin communication to manipulate others' thoughts or actions.
2. **Demonstrate respect:** Effective leaders behave in ways that show genuine care for others and show them that they are valued regardless of their position in the organization.
3. **Create transparency:** When a leader is genuine and honest in all dealings and avoids secrets, hidden agendas, and false impressions, he or she earns trust.
4. **Right wrongs:** These leaders take actions to correct mistakes or make restitutions. They apologize when they are wrong.

Covey, Steven. *The Speed of Trust: The One Thing That Changes Everything*

5. Show loyalty: Trusted leaders give credit to others and always speak about them as if they are in the room.
6. Deliver results: A trusted leader defines the desired results of any action well in advance and ensures that they are within his or her capabilities. Then he or she devotes the energy to making those results occur.
7. Get better: Continuous improvement — both personal and for others — should be a leader's goal. Stagnating at a particular level of expertise does not inspire trust.
8. Confront reality: Leaders who take on real issues earn others' respect and trust. They do not avoid tough issues hoping they will disappear, and they do not take the easy or popular approach if they do not feel it is the best course.
9. Clarify expectations: To prevent mistrust, an effective leader makes sure everyone understands and agrees to the expectations. This instills trust that people can meet expectations and prevents misunderstandings, disappointments, or a sense of false promises.
10. Practice accountability: Trusted leaders hold themselves and others accountable for responsibilities.
11. Listen first: Trust in a leader is strengthened when he or she seeks to understand another's thoughts, feelings, and viewpoint before trying to influence or prescribe a solution.
12. Keep commitments: When leaders follow through on commitments, they build hope and trust among staff.
13. Extend trust: The most trusted leaders understand that trust is reciprocal. When trust is extended, trust is earned.

Covey's 13 Behaviors of Highly Trusted Leaders

1. Talk Straight
2. Demonstrate Respect
3. Create Transparency
4. Right Wrongs
5. Show Loyalty
6. Deliver Results
7. Get Better
8. Confront Reality
9. Clarify Expectations
10. Practice Accountability
11. Listen First
12. Keep Commitments
13. Extend Trust

Enthusiasm, Positive Humor, Avoiding Put-downs

Enthusiasm and positive humor make the hard work of school less burdensome. Enthusiasm is contagious, and when staff members observe their leader being excited, energetic, and smiling, it helps to diminish feelings of frustration and fatigue. Leaders should be passionate and look for opportunities to exhibit positive humor. They must take their work seriously, but must not take themselves too seriously. Staff members often respond well when a leader looks for opportunities to poke fun at his or her own personality and role as school leader. However, when

Leaders must take their work seriously, but must not take themselves too seriously.

seeking humor, leaders must be sure to avoid put-downs when it comes to others. When staff are complimented and encouraged frequently, the occasional joke is taken as good humor. If all feedback is couched in humor, however, it is difficult for staff to understand where they stand. Constant humor may be perceived of as put-downs, and the result can be devastating.

Identifying and Encouraging Talents and Strengths

Leaders need to make a special effort to encourage staff members by identifying and celebrating their unique talents or strengths. Asking someone to take on new responsibilities, try new things, or attempt to accomplish something again in hopes of greater success shows a leader's interest and supportiveness. A leader can convey a sense of value through encouraging notes or comments, assignments related to a staff member's distinctive skills, and other forms of recognition.

Celebrating Accomplishments, Praising Peers, Being a Role Model

Instructional leaders should look for ways to celebrate staff members' accomplishments, from putting in extra effort to making significant progress toward specific goals. Finding ways to show appreciation personally, such as direct praise, a handwritten note, or a shared compliment with a teacher's spouse, partner, mentor, or other significant person in his or her life conveys warmth and appreciation.

Praise from peers is even more important. Peer recognition helps to foster good working relationships and supports collaborative approaches. Leaders should encourage peers to compliment one another on good work, especially through modeling the behaviors.

One-to-One Communication, Encouraging Idea Sharing

Some of the most important — but least visible — work of a leader occurs through one-to-one communication.

Being an effective leader requires more than the ability to lead serve as a spokesperson, stand up in front of a group and talk, or lead a meeting. While these all are important roles, some of the most important — but least visible — work of a leader occurs through one-to-one communication. Large meetings may be a venue for reinforcing the vision, but individual conversations are essential for building staff relationships. Such communication provides opportunities for personalized encouragement,

coaching, or feedback about negative behaviors. When trying to get volunteers to take on a new challenge, staff may be reluctant to volunteer in a group meeting; a one-to-one conversation, however, can create a more comfortable setting for a staff member to take on something new. These conversations are also important in encouraging staff to express ideas and opinions.

Collaborative Initiatives

A series of 10 collaborative initiatives is described below.

Social Activities

Developing shared visions and goals for the school community and encouraging collaboration are enhanced by opportunities for teachers to meet, socialize, and get to know each other not only as colleagues, but also as people. This is particularly important at the start of a school year. Unlike most jobs, teachers have up to eight weeks of separation from their fellow employees during summer vacation. At the beginning of a new school year, there is some trepidation and uncertainty as staff reconvene to begin another year. Welcome luncheons, picnics, and breakfasts sponsored by the administrative leadership or the parent organization are ways of developing and rekindling friendly and supportive relationships.

New teachers, especially, benefit from social activities. Start-of-school events provide a setting for introductions and help new faculty, staff members, and student teachers begin to integrate into the school culture. New staff feel supported when they are invited to lunch, introduced to others by veteran staff members, offered assistance in locating classrooms or supplies, and so forth. These small but significant activities send a welcoming message and lay a foundation for trust and collaboration.

Retirement celebrations, holiday parties, year-end picnics, golf leagues, sports teams, birthday recognitions, and other celebrations throughout the school year enhance the supportive staff relationships necessary for successful collaboration.

Collaborative Initiatives

Social Activities

Team Building

Rewards, Recognition,
Incentives

Character Education

Conflict Resolution

Travel

Sharing Life Stories

Family Partnerships

Community and
Business Partnerships

Community Service

Welcome luncheons, picnics, and breakfasts sponsored by the administrative leadership or the parent organization are ways of developing and rekindling friendly and supportive relationships.

Team Building

Authentic relationships are fostered through shared work and shared responsibilities. Providing opportunities for staff to work together and participate in team-building strategies and training sessions support collaboration. Creating student groups that are taught by interdisciplinary teams of teachers or organizing a school into small learning communities are two strategies for integrating team building into a school's culture.

Interdisciplinary teaching teams usually share the same physical space and have common planning time. Because teaching teams share the same students, there are more opportunities to personalize learning. Together, the team can focus on student needs more easily. Before individuals can be expected to contribute well in team teaching, however, they must develop friendly relationships and trust with their fellow team members. Instructional leaders can help foster trust among staff by arranging for team-building strategies, such as trust walks and ropes courses. Activities such as these create a sense of interdependence, as team members must work together to succeed. The cooperative-action-for-success mindset developed through these types of activities is intended to carry over into the teaching team's collaborative capacity and creativity.

See Chapter 7 for a Team Effectiveness Inventory.

Instructional leaders need to cultivate an awareness of unity for all team members. Each team member must recognize that there are opportunities to contribute to the team, learn from others, and work together to achieve common goals. Leadership empowers the team to act together to reach a joint objective, thus enabling the team to function effectively in a participative leadership manner. Every team member feels responsibility for the team's success, all team members share a common purpose and a sense of ownership in the work, and communications within the team create a climate of trust and openness.

Rewards, Recognition, and Incentives

Recognition affirms for teachers the value of their profession and their contributions to it.

Everyone likes to be recognized for work well done, and educators are no exception. Rewards, recognition, and incentives motivate teachers to participate in the school community. Recognition affirms for teachers the value of their profession and their contributions to it.

Instructional Leadership — Quadrant D Leadership Practices

It is important to recognize publicly professional achievements and milestones, such as an instructional success, the attainment of a degree, completion of a professional development activity, or the development of a curriculum, curricular map, or Gold Seal Lesson. Announcing teacher accomplishments at schoolwide meetings, in parent newsletters, or in the school newspaper are common ways to provide teachers with recognition.

As with learners, teachers respond positively to recognition and are motivated to continue to develop activities and initiatives that improve teaching and learning. Rewards must be known, and the criteria for receiving them need to be defined clearly. Typical incentives for educators include financial honorariums, time allotted during the school day to engage in planning for various initiatives, and opportunities to assume leadership roles. Just as schools have monthly student awards, some schools hand out teacher- or employee-of-the-month awards. A teacher might be awarded a temporary, special parking place near the building or other special privilege for a school contribution.

Summer scholarships for additional study in a teacher's discipline or area of expertise are an excellent incentive for some educators. Candidates for this type of an award may have to apply and indicate why they feel they deserve the honor. Summer internships at local businesses or organizations also may be motivators.

Character Education

Character education programs are usually associated with students, but well designed programs for staff have the same benefits as those for students. As with character education for students, programs for staff result in teachers who perform more effectively, show greater self-control, demonstrate better control of their anger and frustration levels, and are more willing to share with others. When an effective program is in place, staff recognize that character education can strengthen positive personal relationships.

Character education refers to activities and behaviors that focus on the development of personal characteristics that promote:

Guiding Principles for Character Education Programs

Adaptability
Compassion
Contemplation
Courage
Honesty
Initiative
Loyalty
Optimism
Perseverance
Respect
Responsibility
Trustworthiness

- high levels of personal and academic functioning
- positive interpersonal relationships
- a school environment conducive to teaching, learning, and academic achievement
- successful adult roles and contributions to society

Most character education programs are based on a series of guiding principles. The International Center has identified 12 guiding principles to consider when building a character education program: (1) adaptability, (2) compassion, (3) contemplation, (4) courage, (5) honesty, (6) initiative, (7) loyalty, (8) optimism, (9) perseverance, (10) respect, (11) responsibility, and (12) trustworthiness. In a well organized character education program, these principles become part of everyday experiences, activities, and interactions in the school. Faculty and staff promote and model these guiding principles, and functioning by them supports a more sensitive, caring, friendly, cooperative, and helpful atmosphere for staff and students alike.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict occurs when there is disagreement about ideas or actions. There are many reasons why conflict may occur in an organization. Poor communication among groups or individuals, differences in the sense of mission, a lack of openness and honesty, individual needs or egos, or an individual's pursuit of power at the expense of others all may contribute to conflict. Dissatisfaction with the current leadership, because it is weak or, perhaps, because there has been a recent change in leadership, may also lead to clashes throughout the organization.

Though conflict is inevitable, it may be minimized, solved, or even harnessed to create positive change. Recognizing the cause of conflict is a first step in resolving the problem. Causes of conflict include:

- needs or wants not being met
- limited knowledge
- differing values
- unrealistic expectations
- assumptions translated into fact
- perceptions and values being questioned
- differences in personality, values, race, or gender

Instructional Leadership — Quadrant D Leadership Practices

Conflict may be destructive or constructive. It is destructive when it polarizes people and decreases collaboration and cooperation. Sometimes, conflict may divert attention to areas that are not significant. In some instances, it may lead to irresponsible decisions or behaviors. Conflict is constructive when it helps to relieve anxiety and stress. When instructional leaders support a culture of strong relationships, then cooperation, support, and understanding become more natural responses. Sometimes, conflict may lead to solutions to problems facing the group.

Conflict may be
destructive or
constructive.

Groups experiencing conflict must collaborate to reach some sort of consensus or general agreement. When group members collaborate, each individual is respected and supported. All members are permitted to provide their opinions, whether they agree or disagree. Holding differing points of view is commonplace and healthy for a group. Eventually, the group reaches a point of acceptance and forms some kind of consensus.

In highly successful schools, instructional leaders ensure that staff members experience and demonstrate respect for one another throughout the conflict resolution process. Consensus is not reached until everyone has an opportunity to share ideas and willingly agrees to the compromise.

Travel

Travel can be an effective element in a district's professional development plans. Travel of all types — extended release time, exchange programs, internships, and professional conferences — has the potential to support professional growth, increase an educator's personal and professional self-esteem, expand knowledge, improve instructional technique, and more. Ultimately, students profit from their teachers' adventures.

Some school districts offer teachers extended release time or sabbaticals. Many teachers use sabbaticals to travel and enrich their knowledge of the subjects they teach. International experiential education opportunities allow teachers to learn unique pedagogical approaches found in different parts of the world. Other study abroad programs may focus on countries where students face daily challenges unlike those students face in this country. In these situations, the teacher usually meets with members of the business community and other leaders to gain a deeper understanding of the culture and its impact on education.

Teacher travel exchanges also can be worthwhile. There are a number of options for teachers to explore. A teacher might exchange positions with someone in his or her own discipline, for example. For a language teacher, exchanging with a colleague from a native speaking country of their language of expertise may be exciting. Using an exchange to immerse himself or herself in a culture about which he or she teaches benefits a teacher personally and professionally.

When teachers travel together to attend professional conferences and workshops or to chaperone students on field trips closer to home, the travel experience can serve as an opportunity for relationships to form and grow. When staff members attend a conference together, for instance, they may discuss the value and relevance of the ideas learned. From these conversations, the group may initiate dialogue about a new program, curriculum, assessment instrument, or other activity within the school community.

Sharing Life Stories

Everyone has a story to tell, and effective instructional leaders understand the value of encouraging staff to share life stories. Uncovering life stories involves two basic but essential tasks: asking questions and truly listening to the responses. Even the most basic questions — Why did you become a teacher? What were your first teaching responsibilities? What is your most enjoyable teaching experience? Who is your education hero and why? — can create valuable opportunities to build and strengthen relationships.

Sharing life stories gives meaning and value to our experiences. Not only does recounting stories benefit the storyteller, but it also enriches the school community. Storytelling offers a way to improve interaction with and for staff who work in isolation or follow hectic schedules. Being invited to share life stories lets the storyteller know that he or she is valued and that his or her experiences are meaningful to others.

Storytelling is one of the most effective methods for engaging, teaching, increasing group participation, and establishing trust.

Storytelling is one of the most effective methods for engaging, teaching, increasing group participation, and establishing trust. As the pace continues to quicken in our high-speed society, it is increasingly important to find ways to build interpersonal connections and a sense of community. Storytelling is a good, old-fashioned communication skill. It can help break down staff perceptions — if only subconscious — of leaders as authority

figures who embody a lofty set of characteristics. Telling relevant personal stories can be a fun, informative, and interesting way for a leader to help group members develop a sense of humanness, realness, and trust about him or her. This supports a sense of cohesiveness within the group, which supports the group in progressing toward its goals. Small group settings allow staff to share and listen to stories while building relationships and trust.

Family Partnerships

Teachers and instructional leaders need to reach out to parents to engage them in their student's program. Making connections with a student's family usually strengthens the support a student receives for learning. When parents understand the school's programs and vision as well as the learning goals for their children, they tend to be more supportive of instructional activities, classroom rules and policies, grading systems, and so forth.

Schools may attempt to involve parents in many ways, including:

- social events, such as a family days, school picnics, "get to know your school" nights, etc.
- volunteer opportunities for activities, such as tutoring or chaperoning student trips
- dinner events that include a brief program focusing on a priority issue
- information sessions and/or printed materials describing instructional approaches or explaining a new assessment program
- presentations about college admissions, scholarship opportunities, and financial assistance programs
- meetings to explain specific programs
- student-led conferences
- parent-teacher organizations
- school visits

Community and Business Partnerships

Having a community or business partner can bring many benefits to a school, classroom, and teacher. Businesses partners may donate up-to-

Do's and Don'ts of Personal Storytelling

- **Do** talk about personal experiences; they are best for engendering trust.
- **Do** keep stories succinct and interesting.
- **Do** tell stories that offer a deeper message or meaning.
- **Do** tell stories well and with appropriate emotional engagement.
- **Do** be certain that stories relate to the group's mission and ideally help move the group forward.
- **Don't** tell stories to avoid or dance around what is happening in the group.
- **Don't** tell a story that may be offensive or involves someone who might not want it told.

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date equipment to the school or allow students and teachers to access their equipment. They may offer internships or summer jobs for teachers and/or students. They may provide awards for exceptional teacher performance or student achievement. Some community partners create and manage collaborative programs to support learning while building relationships among a range of organizations.

In support of instruction, a business partner may be able to advise teachers about curriculum. This is especially helpful in career and technical education programs or career academies, where members of the business community serve as advisors. Because standards change so quickly in the global marketplace, it can be difficult for an educator to stay current in some of the practices within some fields. Through internships or summer work, teachers gain current and valuable insight into the expectations and requirements of a particular workplace or field. This helps them to create engaging and relevant lessons for their students.

Community and business representatives may support instruction through mentoring programs for students, student internships, or student work study opportunities. Some businesses encourage employees to serve as tutors for students who need academic assistance.

Individuals from the community and businesses may also become a part of a school's character education program. At Kennesaw Mountain High School in Kennesaw, Georgia, business and community representatives co-teach the character education program. A senior student presents a guiding principle or character trait and the business or community representative provides real-world examples of how it is applied.

Businesses benefit from partnerships with schools, too. A vibrant public education system is part of a healthy community. When they engage in partnerships with schools, businesses support the health of the communities where their employees and customers live and work. Businesses also benefit by having the chance to get to know students who may have talents and interests that might make them excellent employees in the future.

Community Service

A number of schools require students to complete a specified number of hours in community service programs. There are many opportunities

for the teachers who oversee or facilitate community service programs to obtain support for these activities. When a teacher is asked to identify community service opportunities for students, he or she has a chance to meet or speak with many community members, including representatives from various community and governmental agencies, churches and synagogues, and civic and service organizations. In this way, these programs offer not only important life experience for students, but also result in positive public relations for the school, students, and staff.

Just as students participate in community service programs, many educators participate as well. Among other benefits, community service provides opportunities for teachers to feel personal satisfaction, create a better school image, and gain a deeper understanding of the community and its relationship to the school's mission and goals. Networking that may occur through these connections also may lead to additional beneficial partnerships with the school. Teachers may participate in the local rotary club or chamber of commerce, Habitat for Humanity, hospice volunteers, book groups, Bible study groups, business training associations, or other activities.

Finding Time for Collaboration

One of the most frequently cited reasons for the lack of collaboration is lack of time. With a priority on instruction and the obligation of keeping students fully supervised during schools hours, teachers may find collaborate time difficult to come by. This situation must be rectified if schools sincerely expect to have an impact on instruction. A memo or a new policy alone will not lead to better instruction. To accomplish lasting changes in instruction, teachers need to observe, discuss, and reflect about instruction with their colleagues. It is essential to ensure that teachers are given time to collaborate.

Once planning time has been created, teachers can maximize its value by avoiding loose agendas. The practical value of collaboration time is enhanced when the team focuses on specific instructional needs, such as improving student writing or implementing differentiated instruction practices.

Effective Teams

To accomplish lasting changes in instruction, teachers need to observe, discuss, and reflect about instruction with their colleagues. It is essential that teachers are given time to collaborate.

4 Creating a Context for Instructional Leadership

Successful schools have found creative ways to fulfill state requirements, negotiate employment contracts, and properly supervise students — and still make time for teachers to collaborate. Following are some ways that schools can carve out time for teacher collaboration.

Use Master Schedules

The best, but perhaps hardest, way to create time for collaboration is to build it into the school day as part of the master schedule. A master schedule that allows teachers to have time to work together in both interdisciplinary teams (small learning communities) and content teams is best. It is important to decide up front what the priority is and to start with that to build the master schedule. For example, many schools have found that teachers will naturally find discretionary time to meet with colleagues in the same discipline. However, teachers on interdisciplinary teams who work with a common group of students may be less likely to meet on their own. In these instances, schools may have greater impact on student achievement by creating collaborative time for interdisciplinary teacher teams formed around a group of students.

Class schedules should be planned after group planning times are placed on the schedule.

Daily and weekly team time within the school day must be given the highest priority in the master schedule. Class schedules should be planned after group planning times are placed on the schedule. Some schools find that in order to accommodate essential planning time for groups of teachers, they must adjust the number of special offerings for students.

Schedule Late Arrival or Early Dismissal Days

Periodic 90-minute late arrival or early dismissal days will not reduce instructional time significantly, but such time blocks can provide precious collaboration opportunities for teachers. Some schools use late arrival or early dismissal days on a monthly basis to ensure that regular team planning time is available.

Some middle and high schools schedule these blocks on a weekly basis to nurture staff collaboration. The International School of the Americas in San Antonio, Texas, for example, uses a four-week rotation, with one week for full staff meetings, one for grade-level meetings, one for department or subject meetings, and one for professional learning sessions.

Hire Additional Staff

Hiring floating substitute teachers to cover classrooms allows regular teachers to plan or learn together. Floating substitutes move through the school, class period by class period, to free up time for teachers to collaborate. Also, support staff and assistants can help to reduce the supervision duties that teachers frequently have so they can use that time for collaboration.

Use Contractual Staff Development Days

Most teacher contracts build in non-instructional days for professional development. Instead of scheduling general workshops for these days, schools can create multiple collaboration and staff development activities that meet individual needs. Instead of daylong, standalone activities, schools can try scheduling blocks of time across the calendar to provide shorter, more frequent school-based learning opportunities.

Schools can try scheduling blocks of time across the calendar to provide shorter, more frequent school-based learning opportunities.

Modify Staff Meetings

Some schools find success in replacing some of their traditional full staff meeting times with collaboration sessions. Administrative business traditionally covered in staff meetings is accomplished through e-mails or other forms of communication so that professional collaboration can occur.

Create Alternative Learning Days

Daylong, offsite field experiences for students can be organized in order to create collaboration blocks for teachers. Another way to free up time for teachers while creating meaningful experiences for students is to develop a series of student workshops led by parents, community members, or administrators.

Plan Beyond the Instructional Calendar

Teachers may find great value in multi-day summer learning institutes that allow them to focus in-depth on areas of strategic importance for the district. Multi-day breaks for students during the school year can be used to support teacher learning.

Creating Effective Team Structures

There are several formal structures that schools can use to create opportunities for teachers to collaborate and increase the level of empowerment and leadership in the school community, including:

- small learning communities
- clustered classrooms
- team teaching
- co-teaching
- grade level teams
- school leadership teams
- critical friends groups
- professional learning communities

Small Learning Communities

Small learning communities may take several different forms. One format is a career academy, in which regular academic coursework is augmented by additional or more focused classes related to a specific theme or field in order to prepare students for a particular career pathway. For example, students in a technology career academy will take many courses in mathematics, science, and technology.

Alternative schools, another type of small learning community, serve students with unique learning needs, from struggling learners to those who have behavioral issues to those who have advanced skills. In these settings, students are supported in their learning in a less traditional environment than in most schools with a goal of helping them achieve to the fullest based on their challenges, strengths, and interests.

Ninth grade academies are yet another small learning community. These comprise all freshmen and their teachers. This more intimate learning community eases the student transition to high school and provides more opportunities for students and teachers to forge strong relationships with one another.

When a small learning community structure is in place, teachers generally teach all of their classes within the small learning community. They share common planning time, collaborate on instructional decisions, and have

time for professional development that is related to the theme of the small learning community. In some cases, staff share control over the schedule, budget, and program design, which gives them additional opportunities to work together and understand and support one another.

A small learning community setup also affords opportunities for interdisciplinary instruction. Within this structure, staff members find support from one another through joint efforts to reach the individual needs of their shared students and to make the small learning community — not just individual classes — a success.

Small-scale schooling through formal and informal organizational structures not only personalizes learning for students, but also personalizes staff relationships. These teachers form a team and have more opportunities to get to know students — and each other — very well. Working directly with fewer staff allows teachers to forge strong relationships with members of the team. Opportunities to interact, plan and develop curriculum, create assessments, and initiate various strategies and curricular options are more numerous within the small learning community structure. Teachers work together to meet the needs of the students within the smaller structure.

Small-scale schooling through formal and informal organizational structures not only personalizes learning for students, but also personalizes staff relationships.

Clustered Classrooms

The most frequent organization for elementary schools is by grade level by wing or area. This makes it easier for students of a particular age to be together and for teachers in a common grade to collaborate. At the secondary school level, however, it is traditional to group teachers by subject area, making it easier for teachers in the same discipline to collaborate. As a result, students move frequently and over long distances in school. This structure makes it harder for teachers in different subjects who have the same students to collaborate. Such a structure gives precedence to the needs of the content rather than to the needs of the students.

Many schools are attempting to address this issue by clustering the classrooms of teachers who need to collaborate around groups of students. This student-centered approach can be facilitated by classroom assignment and building construction. For example, a recently constructed building to serve 1,300 9th graders — an enormous challenge

— was designed with clusters of five classrooms as a pod off intersecting corridors of the school. A teacher workstation was created near each classroom cluster, which led to a significant increase in staff collaboration and intervention to improve student achievement.

In existing secondary schools, some schools reassign classrooms to cluster 9th grade and/or 10th grade classrooms in one wing of the school. This makes it easier for teachers to collaborate and discuss common students and their needs. Another variation is to cluster classes based on teacher teams that share students. For example, a school might assign a 9th grade history classroom near a 9th grade English classroom to enable these teachers to meet often and to group students for team teaching around common themes.

Team Teaching

One form of team teaching takes collaboration to the next level and places students and a pair or more of teachers in the same large classroom. Team teaching makes it easy to draw on the strengths of each teacher to enhance student learning experiences. For example, a school might create a humanities block by combining traditional English and history classes. Teachers from each of these disciplines form a team and work with students in a double block of class time. They lead students through a variety of literature, history, reading, writing, and reflection activities to make connections between language and history. At one school, three teachers — one each for math, science, and technology — created a triple period, project-based curriculum to help students develop required concepts through applied activities.

Team teaching draws on the strengths of each teacher, thereby enhancing student learning experiences.

In addition to formal joint teaching assignments, team teaching also can be ad hoc, meaning teachers come together for a specific lesson or series of lessons. For example, a mathematics teacher in a health academy may bring in a health teacher to talk about how math skills are applied in real-world medical research. School leaders can encourage this approach so that it becomes a common practice. This not only supports creativity and collaboration, but also nurtures the ability of staff to cover classrooms other than their own when necessary.

Another team teaching structure organizes teachers from the core academic areas into a team to teach a group of students collectively.

Instructional Leadership — Quadrant D Leadership Practices

Staff work together to plan instruction and determine which instructional practices will be most effective in meeting students' needs and raising achievement. In some instances, team members may focus on improving their practice through peer observations and collaborative scoring.

In team teaching situations, team members may be given responsibility for deciding what resources should be purchased, identifying student expectations, setting curricula, developing assessments, and identifying and pursuing professional development opportunities. They might be involved in determining professional and student placements. Working together on these and other initiatives strengthens collaboration. A sense of interdependence motivates individual team members to assist and support others for the success of the team as a whole.

Team teaching is the exception to the way most teachers have taught and learned; however, the rewards can be significant. Team teaching requires patience, but it creates more opportunities for teachers to learn from one another and, ultimately, this leads to better instruction. Although teachers sometimes have to compromise, they share responsibilities and strengths to support student learning. Action research frequently takes place among the team members. They explore, discuss, practice, and evaluate methods of improving teaching and learning.

Co-Teaching

Co-teaching, which is similar to team teaching, has become a popular approach for serving students with disabilities. Although there is a variety of models, co-teaching is defined as a general education teacher and a special education teacher working together in a regular education classroom that includes students with disabilities. In this model, the general and special educators share instructional responsibility, resources, and accountability for all of the students assigned to the classroom. Together, the teachers plan, present, and evaluate instruction and student progress. They also share equally in classroom and behavior management.

Co-teaching describes a variety of approaches: lead and support, station teaching, parallel teaching, complementary teaching, team teaching, and team teaching/follow-up teaching, but teachers in these positions need not confine themselves to a single strategy. Depending on the needs of

the students in the class or the goal of a given lesson plan, teachers may decide to use different approaches at different times. It is important for co-teachers to decide together which approaches to use based on their individual skills and the instructional goals.

With greater emphasis on access to a general education curriculum for students with disabilities, there is renewed interest in co-teaching as a way to include students in regular classrooms while providing instruction that supports success for all of the students in the class. Teachers working together in a co-teaching program share the responsibility for instruction and accountability. Implementing a successful co-teaching program requires strong commitment to professional development by administrators and teachers, effective use of dedicated time for co-planning, and fidelity to the co-teaching model. When two educators combine their expertise in a classroom, students profit both academically and socially.

Further information about co-teaching and serving the needs of special education students can be found in the K-8 and high school versions of the International Center publication, *Strategies for Students with Disabilities in the General Education Curriculum*.

Grade Level Teams

Grade level teams are one of the most rapidly growing examples of staff collaboration. These types of teams have been more common in elementary schools, where teachers of the same grade level meet to compare curriculum plans and ensure that instruction is similar across classrooms. This encourages teachers to share ideas and discuss students who are struggling or whose needs are not being met.

In secondary schools, grade level teaming has been less common traditionally, though teachers may meet often as departments to share ideas within a subject. However, as concerns have arisen about lack of student achievement, particularly in 9th grade, grade level teams have become more common at this level.

Grade-level collaboration allows teachers to examine student successes and struggles across all subjects. If there is an inconsistent pattern of failure, the conversation may lead to ideas about possible interventions for a particular student. Even if there is no obvious answer, when working together, the group is likely to be more creative in identifying potential solutions. Also, the group can commit to making changes in all of the classrooms, rather than leaving each teacher on his or her own to experiment.

Grade level teaming is more easily accomplished when members of the group are scheduled with a common group of students. Teachers will naturally find time to meet and discuss ideas with teachers of the same subject, but it often requires the formality of a common meeting time — one built into the schedule — to bring together grade level teams.

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School Leadership Team

Leadership is one of the keys to school success, but it need not be vested in a single individual, such as a traditional school principal. Successful schools abound with models of distributed and shared leadership. In nearly all schools, it takes many leaders in various roles to make a successful school. This does not mean that a school has many independent decision makers working toward their own unique visions of learning. Shared leadership is successful only when there is a common vision. A shared understanding allows individual teachers and groups of teachers to make incremental decisions consistent with the overarching vision.

There are many different structures for staff involvement in building leadership teams. For example, there might be a traditional team comprising an elementary teacher from each grade level or a secondary school teacher from each department. In a school with multiple magnet programs or career academies, there might be a leadership team representing each sector of the school community. Multiple teams also may be formed around school functions, priorities, or goals, such as safety, instruction, partnerships, literacy, or technology.

For building level leadership teams to function effectively, they need to:

- have clearly defined responsibilities that align with the overall school vision
- meet frequently
- be held accountable by recording and communicating decisions and actions
- possess skills in communication and consensus decision making

Critical Friends Groups

The three key components of a critical friends group are:

1. collegial support
2. substantive conversation
3. collaborative inquiry

A critical friends group (CFG) is a special structure of teacher collaboration that was created over the past decade by the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES), the National School Reform Faculty, and The Annenberg Institute. A CFG brings together small groups of teachers within a school for at least two years so staff can help each other look seriously at their classroom practices and make adjustments. The three key components of a critical friends group are: (1) collegial support, (2) substantive conversation, and (3) collaborative inquiry.

After developing a solid grounding in group process skills, CFG members focus on setting learning goals for students and instructional strategies for themselves. The goals are stated specifically enough so that others can observe them in operation. CFGs devise strategies to move students toward the specified goals and collect evidence in a variety of ways. In a setting of mutual support and honest critical feedback from trusted peers, teachers strive to affirm their goals and revise their strategies.

CFG members share their students' work, lesson plans, case studies, classroom problems, peer observation evidence, and prospective texts and materials. Using specific protocols to guide the discussions, CFG members help each other fine tune their teaching by analyzing and critiquing artifacts, observations, and issues pertaining to instructional practice. There are unique strategies for looking at student work, classroom observations, classroom dilemmas, or text-based conversations. The highly structured protocols are designed to produce high quality conversation and reflection to maximize the use of teacher collaboration time.

Successful CFGs usually meet with a trained coach or facilitator for at least two hours once or twice a month. Over the course of a school year, this can add up to 18 to 30 hours of teacher development. Many schools have multiple CFGs, and typically, the groups broaden their perspectives and connections with others through partnerships and regional meetings with CFGs from other schools.

Professional Learning Communities

A staff that functions as a professional learning community comes together for learning as a supportive group. Participants interact, test their ideas, challenge one another's ideas and interpretations, and process new information gleaned from one another. Typically, teachers meet to discuss topics of their own choosing related to instruction, student achievement, and assessment.

Authors and education researchers Shirley Hord and William Sommers assert there are five components of professional learning communities:

1. shared beliefs, values, and vision
2. shared and supportive leadership
3. collective learning and its application
4. supportive condition
5. shared personal practice

Hord, Shirley M. and
Sommers, William A.
*Leading Professional
Learning Communities:
Voices from Research and
Practice*

When the five components are in place, a group is able to meet regularly to solve problems and make decisions. This benefits teachers by:

- decreasing a sense of isolation
- increasing commitment to the school's mission and goals
- encouraging collaborative responsibility toward student achievement and school success
- renewing the motivation to teach
- lowering rates of absenteeism
- increasing knowledge about students' needs and successful teaching practices

Holding Teams Accountable for Learning

Establishing teams is a positive step toward creating a context for instructional leadership, but there must also be actions to hold teams accountable. Accountability is a combination of expectations and follow

Accountability is a combination of expectations and follow up. Holding teachers accountable for student learning begins with building a belief system that reflects the premise that all students can and should learn.

up. Most people do what they know how to do, following their beliefs about who can learn. Holding teachers accountable for student learning begins with building a belief system that reflects the premise that all students can and should learn. Observable teacher behaviors, actions, and words must communicate to each individual student, "I know you can learn what I am going to teach." High expectations are observable. It is the responsibility of school leaders to help teachers internalize and demonstrate high-expectation behavior.

Principal Participation in Team Meetings

An instructional leader should participate occasionally in some team meetings to have conversations with the teachers about expected student performance goals. Established student learning goals and teacher performance goals should be shared with students and posted in classrooms and hallways. It is very valuable for teachers to have opportunities to share issues, ideas, and teaching results not only with peers, but also with the principal in a supportive atmosphere. Instructional leaders can help keep the team focused on achievement goals while offering support and help when needed. Their presence has a positive impact on productivity and performance by ensuring that everyone understands the learning expectations.

Focus on Learning

Improvement comes when teachers change instructional practices in the classroom. Teams need to be reminded of this. Change seems to be accomplished best using deliberate analysis and discussion in team meetings. Formative and summative student achievement data must be an incessant focus in team meetings. Who successfully taught an objective to students who had been struggling? Whose students made the most gains on an objective, and what strategies were used?

Teams can use district benchmarks or develop their own to assess progress, but they must be timely and be incorporated as part of the process. Each teacher's results are examined so the teacher can receive guidance for implementing better instructional strategies. The team should provide a forum for instructional practices and improvement to be discussed with an overall focus on results, namely student learning.

Instructional Leadership — Quadrant D Leadership Practices

Invite Feedback

Successful instructional leaders invite students to bring to them directly performance issues that teachers do not seem to be addressing. If teachers understand that their performance might be reflected in direct student feedback to the school's leader, they will act more responsibly in following up on team recommendations and working toward stated learning goals. Students play a role in instructional change. When students understand teachers' expectations of themselves and of the students, they become partners in the process.

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Express Expectations and Recognize Performance

Every interaction between a teacher and a student is an opportunity for learning. Instructional leaders should recognize performance and reinforce expectations at every opportunity. It is essential to acknowledge when teachers teach a rigorous lesson with depth and complexity. This validates the importance of the time it takes to plan, teach, and grade in order to bring each student to a higher level of learning. One of the most effective ways to recognize teacher accomplishment is by spending time with teachers and students in the classroom and applauding their work.

Share Successes

Sharing successful strategies during team time is vital. Master teachers whose students learned the required content are able to address factors that interfere with learning and help develop solutions to overcome obstacles. They can model the concepts, guide practice problems, or share strategies for assessing understanding. The process follows these steps: (1) instruction occurs, (2) student learning is assessed, and (3) student scores are reviewed in a team meeting. If the students do not score well, the teacher group can discuss approaches to help the teacher develop new strategies.

Nurture Teacher Leadership

As a result of planned team collaboration time, collegial relationships become supportive and positive. As problems arise, the team finds solutions. Teachers in need of help are coached to achieve increments of success. As teams become more confident, they become more willing

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to be held accountable. Members begin to assume leadership roles in school improvement efforts. As team members, teachers may feel less threatened about expected performance. Each has the opportunity to ask for help, and if more intense training is needed, onsite or off-campus staff development sessions can be arranged.

Terminate Ineffective Teachers

Team efforts make it easier to make hard decisions about terminating ineffective teachers. There are instances when teachers do not improve and must be counseled into endeavors outside of education. When repeated opportunities for professional growth and support are offered but are unsuccessful, documentation exists to recommend termination. Termination should be a last resort, but teams that have been actively involved in improvement will support termination of poorly performing teachers if that becomes necessary. Collegial efforts should be considered part of each teacher's annual evaluation. This expectation should be communicated to the staff during every staff meeting.

Teams can and should be held accountable for student learning when there are procedures in place that support teachers to foster success. Performance expectations for students and teachers must be observable. When there are practices and procedures in place that foster the acquisition of mastery teaching skills, teachers who are sincerely interested in and passionate about student learning can become master teachers. This expertise should be considered an asset to the school, and master teachers should be called upon to assist and support their colleagues in improving instruction. In addition, the performance of these teachers should be acknowledged and celebrated whenever possible.

Creating Collective Responsibility for Student Learning

One thing that is readily apparent at schools that have made significant instructional changes is the fact that every staff member feels a responsibility for student success. Achieving a sense of collective responsibility for student learning is a big challenge for instructional leaders.

Creating collective responsibility is easier to accomplish at elementary levels, because most teachers are responsible for teaching all subjects

to a group of students. When warranted, regular classroom teachers bring in reading specialists, special education teachers, and teaching assistants/aides to help support students. Classroom teachers need to acknowledge the valuable work of these additional educators and how their efforts contribute to student achievement.

Because middle and high school teachers at most schools are responsible for individual subjects rather than a core group of students, it is much more difficult to build a collective responsibility at these levels. Further, there is a traditional subject area hierarchy in which academic courses are perceived to be more important than the arts, physical education, or technical courses. Such a hierarchy is an obstacle to building a collective responsibility for student achievement, especially when student achievement is measured primarily or solely by state assessments in English language arts and mathematics.

Focus on Student Achievement

Working with all teachers, instructional leaders need to reinforce the focus on overall achievement goals constantly and to make connections with every instructional activity and every student interaction, such as advisory time, meals, recreation, sports, and extracurricular activities. All teachers need to be reminded of how their work influences overall achievement. When teachers are reminded of the goals of student success and can see their contribution to that success, they begin to share a collective responsibility for student learning.

Involve All Teachers in Curriculum and Planning

When student success is focused only on English language arts and mathematics assessments, there is a tendency to involve only some teachers in improvement efforts. Leaders must consciously seek to include as many teachers as possible, from all subject areas, in analyzing problems and crafting solutions. When leaders involve all teachers in planning and improvement activities, staff members begin to develop a shared responsibility for student success.

Promote the Value of Every Subject

In secondary schools, where classroom work is isolated to a single subject, most teachers have little understanding of the learning

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experiences that exist in other classes. Without firsthand experience, teachers may rely on stereotypes about what goes on in a shop or a gym class. Sometimes these perceptions are based on their own experiences in school. As a result, teachers may have little understanding of the rich learning experiences that occur today in those same classroom environments. Instructional leaders can identify and create opportunities for teachers across departments and disciplines to share the unique and challenging learning activities from each subject with other teachers. An increased understanding can lead to greater respect and recognition of the importance of every subject to student achievement.

Compliment All Teachers Generously

School leaders have the advantage of spending time in classrooms throughout the school. This enables them to make comparisons and identify outstanding learning experiences that engage students and challenge them to think in rigorous ways or to apply their learning through relevant activities. Instructional leaders should be generous in lauding teacher successes and recognizing outstanding instruction that supports student achievement.

Think Beyond Testing

In this era of accountability for core academic achievement, schools sometimes marginalize learning that is not within the tested standards for English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. A well educated child is not a collection of learning standards that have been covered, but a person who is able to apply skills and knowledge to real-world situations.

It is important to remember the learning that takes place through activities that are not tested specifically within the standards. Through such opportunities students develop or reinforce skills in critical and innovative thinking, inquiry, creativity, problem solving, writing, and speaking. These skills enable students to take pride in their own work and to develop confidence in working with peers.

Celebrate Successes

Opportunities to reward effective teaching may not arise often, and when they do, they tend to occur long after teachers put in their efforts to

improve student learning. Look for every chance to celebrate achievement and involve the entire school community, including students and parents, in the celebrations. Frequent celebrations can help to strengthen the collective responsibility for student learning.

One of the key components for building a context for instructional leadership is to build a sense of purpose and urgency. Little will change in instruction if teachers do not feel a need to improve. But teachers will be frustrated if they feel that their team lacks a purpose. Meetings will feel like wasted time that takes away from teaching rather than enhancing it. Teacher teams must have a clear purpose and a sense of urgency to use their time wisely and productively.

Sense of Purpose and Urgency

Become Future-Focused

Efforts to improve instruction through instructional leadership may leave teachers on the defensive. When teachers hear that their instruction must change and improve, they may focus their time on protecting the status quo rather than listening to new ideas and taking risks to try new approaches.

The vast majority of teachers are responsible, devote considerable effort to their work, and perform as well as their knowledge allows. Creating a sense of purpose and urgency for these teachers may require a delicate approach that includes recognition of what they have done well in the past while reflecting about what can be improved in the future. This approach will not work for the minority of teachers who choose not to work hard or whose efforts reflect minimal contributions to student learning. Teachers who knowingly perform at a low level require strong and direct supervision that requires them to put forth greater effort in improving instruction.

Focusing on the future is a positive and effective approach to improving instruction and changing practices. It is not useful to dwell on past behavior or current performance and doing so may lead teachers to become defensive, rather than motivated, about change. Instructional leaders should avoid presenting initiatives as efforts to fix something that is broken. Although there may be evidence of poor instructional practices, leaders are more successful if they avoid being overly critical

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of those practices and shift attention to the potential for success using new practices.

Successful change leaders enlist teachers' support for the implementation of instructional practices that will result in improvements of student achievement in the future. They encourage teachers to take risks, try new practices, evaluate effectiveness, and reinforce those practices that improve student achievement. A future focus is an important component of creating a context in which instructional leadership can take place in the school.

Commit to 21st Century Learning

The phrase "21st century learning" has inspired many teachers, school leaders, and community leaders to raise expectations for education. The transition to a new century, coupled with the recognition of the rapid pace of change in today's world, instills a sense that things need to be different in this different era. While much of the discussion of 21st century skills has focused on preparing students for the future, it is time to face the fact that the future is now. The changing nature of work, technology, and competition in the global job market has far outpaced what the U.S. education system provides for students, despite ongoing efforts by educators and communities to improve their schools. Priorities and goals set by educators at all levels of academia are not closing the gap.

Globalization and rapid technological advancements are having dramatic effects on the ways we communicate and conduct business in our professional and personal lives. Education should increase students' understanding of the world around them. Unfortunately, there is little or no connectivity or integration between subjects and grades in most American schools. As students move from class to class and progress through the grades, they are exposed to isolated bits of content-specific knowledge, but they are not taught how content across classes interconnects or how it can be applied in the world outside of school.

The failure to prepare students is not merely an academic conundrum. Employers are not satisfied with the degree to which students are being prepared for their chosen careers. In spring 2006, The Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families, the Partnership for 21st Century

Skills, and the Society for Human Resource Management produced the report *Are They Really Ready To Work? Employer's Perspectives on the Basic Knowledge and Applied Skills of New Entrants to the 21st Century U.S. Workforce*. Based on an extensive survey and interviews with human resource professionals, the report examines whether the skills of graduates of high school and two- and four-year colleges are adequate for success in today's workplace.

Casner-Lotto, Jill and
Benner, Mary Wright. *Are
They Really Ready To Work?*

The results were overwhelmingly negative. The skills that most schools focus on are out of sync with what most employers want and need, which means that most students are not receiving an education that will help them be successful outside of school. For example, the level of literacy required for entry-level jobs is higher than that of many graduates.

According to The Conference Board: "The education and business communities must agree that applied skills integrated with core academic subjects are the 'design specs' for creating an educational system that will prepare our high school and college graduates to succeed in the modern workplace and community life. These skills are in demand for all students, regardless of their future plans, and will have an enormous impact on our students' ability to compete."

The disconnection between what students are learning in classrooms and the learning they need to succeed in the real world should not come as a surprise. Reports such as 1983's *A Nation at Risk* and others identified this troublesome trend long ago. So why are our students still so ill-prepared? Workforce expert C. Michael Ferraro asserts that the basic problem is that "schools don't believe they are in the workforce readiness business." Instead, schools focus on academic excellence.

National Commission
on Excellence in
Education. *A Nation at
Risk: The Imperative for
Educational Reform*

The need for change is clear, and Americans have been attempting to shift our nation's education focus to preparing students with the skills necessary to thrive in the 21st century. Some early obstacles to this movement were a lack of definition for 21st century skills, no sense of which methods for teaching them would be most effective, and no efficient, effective system for assessing that the skills were being learned.

"Schools don't
believe they are in the
workforce readiness
business."
- C. Michael Ferraro

In an attempt to define 21st century education needs, the U.S. Department of Education, in cooperation with several other organizations, founded the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21). P21's mission is "to serve as a

catalyst to position 21st century skills at the center of U.S. K-12 education by building collaborative partnerships among education, business, community, and government leaders.” The partnership maintains that in order “to successfully face rigorous higher education coursework, career challenges and a globally competitive workforce, U.S. schools must align classroom environments with real world environments by infusing 21st century skills.”

www.21stcenturyskills.org

P21 has identified the knowledge and skills students need to master for success. These elements go beyond the traditional core subjects. The skill sets are organized into four categories, each with its own subset:

1. Core Subjects and 21st Century Themes
 - Global Awareness
 - Financial, Economic, Business, and Entrepreneurial Literacy
 - Civic Literacy
 - Health Literacy
2. Learning and Innovation Skills
 - Creativity and Innovation
 - Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
 - Communication and Collaboration
3. Information, Media, and Technology Skills
 - Information Literacy
 - Media Literacy
 - Information, Communications, and Technology (ICT) Literacy
4. Life and Career Skills
 - Flexibility and Adaptability
 - Initiative and Self-direction
 - Social and Cross-cultural Skills
 - Productivity and Accountability
 - Leadership and Responsibility

The P21 framework is invaluable, but putting it into practice requires schools to shift from a traditional approach to one that incorporates the demands of a 21st century learning experience. Cisco Systems, Inc., a leading international communications technology company, has been an integral partner in the 21st century skills movement. Cisco describes the

needed shift in education as moving from Education 1.0 to Education 3.0. Education 1.0 refers to the traditional education systems. Education 2.0 is the next phase, which focuses on curriculum, teachers, accountability, and leadership. The final phase, in which 21st century learning will occur, is called Education 3.0. Education 3.0 requires what Cisco calls a “holistic transformation” of education that incorporates four core areas:

1. 21st century skills that complement a core curriculum
2. 21st century pedagogy to teach these skills effectively
3. technology to enable and support the pedagogy
4. an agenda for integrated, systemic reform

The International Center agrees with most educators that the efforts of P21 and Cisco capture the essence of the 21st century skills necessary for students to achieve success beyond the classroom. Student learning must go beyond the foundational academic knowledge of core subjects, and students must be taught how to apply this knowledge to the real world. There is a clear progression education can follow to make this happen if educators identify clear goals and embrace a systemic approach to achieve them.

Cisco Systems, Inc.
*Equipping Every Learner
for the 21st Century*

Student learning must go
beyond the foundation
academic knowledge
of core subjects, and
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knowledge to the real
world.

Teach the Way the Brain Learns

Why do some students come to school so eager to learn and then become disengaged inside the classroom? What makes some young students who are naturally curious, with active imaginations and eager minds, “tune out” after they pass through the school’s entrance? Why do other children consistently embrace school as a fun occupation and remain excited at the possibilities ahead of them?

The answers lie in the basic, but often overlooked reality, that students learn differently. The challenge for schools is to find effective ways to tap into students’ inherent instinct to want to know and be able to do. Ironically, however, students often are expected to learn in ways that are inconsistent — sometimes opposite, in fact — to how learning happens. They are required to learn in ways that are convenient for the institution and teacher rather than in ways that are compatible with brain development and consistent with the learning that has taken place since birth outside of school, naturally, without teaching professionals, textbooks, or worksheets.

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Regarding brain development and learning, The Center for Effective Learning offers five learning principles:

Intelligence is a function of experience. Genetics sets parameters and a range of possibilities for intelligence, but within these parameters, experiences matter greatly in developing the full potential of intelligence.

Learning is an inseparable body-brain partnership. Emotion is the gatekeeper to learning and performance. Physical activity is one of the key ingredients for brain health. Physical movement enhances learning.

There are multiple intelligences. Since the 1980s, our definition of intelligence has changed dramatically to embrace a model that recognizes variations in how student brains take in, process, and express new ideas and information.

Learning is a two-step process. Learning consists of: (1) pattern seeking and making meaning (input) and (2) program building for applying what is learned and storing it in long-term memory (output).

Personality/temperament impacts learning. There are two sides to personality/temperament and character. Temperament is a configuration of inclinations, and character is a configuration of habits. Temperament is predisposition, while character is disposition.

Over the past 30 years, research in neuroscience, specifically on the brain and brain health, has contributed greatly to our understanding of the phenomena of learning. Ongoing research in these areas holds significant promise for direct applications in education. In particular, brain plasticity and the related characteristics of neurogenesis and synaptic density open doorways to a wealth of potential implications both for the learning process and for the school learning environment. Brain plasticity research, ongoing since the 1950s, shows that mammalian brain plasticity is connected to environmental richness: the richer the environment, the more brain growth and the higher the synaptic density.

Creating a rich environment for learning involves awareness and incorporation of socialization, physical activity, and mental stimulation. These elements are recognized by many educators as being integral to effective learning, and they form the basis of an approach in which rigorous and relevant curriculum and instruction are supported by strong

www.thecenter4learning.com/html/about_us/history.htm.

The International Center publishes this material in *How Brain Research Impacts Instruction*.

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relationships and a welcoming learning environment to support student success. In varying degrees, these factors can be accommodated within the school day and within school schedules and programs.

The following elements provide a brain-compatible guide for classroom instruction:

- absence of threat
- meaningful content
- choices
- enriched environment
- movement to enhance learning
- adequate time
- immediate feedback
- collaboration
- mastery (application)

Applied brain research encourages the use of instructional strategies designed to maximize mental stimulation and cooperative learning rather than isolated, fact-focused rote memorization. Instead of lecture and other traditional instructional techniques, educators are encouraged to employ strategies that engage students, treat them as active learners rather than empty receptacles into which knowledge can be delivered, and make school a place where students work and teachers observe, not the other way around. So, rather than being sedentary, passive, and seated in neatly aligned rows of desks, learners are allowed to be tactile, experiential, interactive, and social and to move purposefully around the classroom as part of the learning process. Active learning provides multi-sensory stimuli to the brain.

In recent work with educators and schools across the nation, the International Center has recognized the importance of socialization, in the form of supportive relationships, to underpin rigorous and relevant learning. Most successful schools have created learning environments that are not only rigorous and relevant, but also safe, secure, engaging, and caring for staff and students. Leaders in these schools know that humans are social creatures and that strong relationships — between and among students, among students and staff, and with the larger community outside the school — are critical to optimizing growth for every individual.

Successful schools create learning environments that are not only rigorous and relevant, but also safe, secure, engaging, and caring for staff and students.

Socialization also is critical for language development, for sharing ideas, and for fostering creativity. Socialization matters, whether it is a part of everyday classroom learning or in the more subtle but critical learning that takes place elsewhere in the school, such as in arts and music programs, clubs, or extracurricular activities, or through coaching and mentoring. Ensuring that every student feels cared about, valued, and respected by the adults in the school is essential.

Learning Criteria to Support 21st Century Learners

One of the ways that leaders can create a sense of urgency is the effective use of student achievement data. Data is powerful in focusing conversations, but there is an ongoing debate about which data to examine and the mechanisms schools should use to collect it. Should schools be required to use state and federal accountability systems? Schools operated for a long time without formal and quantitative accountability systems.

Over the past few decades, stronger accountability measures have been developed, but they focus only on a few subjects: English language arts, mathematics, and science. This seems like the right thing to do. Who can argue with making sure that students acquire these basic skills? However, the impact on schools has been to make significant changes just to raise a test score. Practices such as eliminating recess and reducing instruction in the arts and technical courses have occurred to students' detriment. Schools need to be cautious in making changes when the measures of success are so narrow.

The problem is that most schools have left the designation of accountability measures to federal and state mandates. Schools need to be more proactive in designing their own comprehensive set of measures — to be used in conjunction with required assessments — to determine education effectiveness.

Many educators today feel conflicted about accountability measures that are limited in scope yet powerful in consequences. They feel as though they are driving a car down the highway only looking out the right side window. They are forced to pay attention to one aspect when they need and want to be looking in all directions. Most educators are tense about

Schools need to be more proactive in designing their own comprehensive set of measures — to be used in conjunction with required assessments — to determine education effectiveness.

the dilemma of limited accountability measures, as if they are waiting for a collision to happen. Stepping back and redefining learning measures in a more comprehensive manner — including, but not limited to, state tests — enables educators to set goals and embrace accountability measures that are more consistent with what they believe about teaching and learning.

There are several questions educators should consider as they work to revise accountability measures, among them:

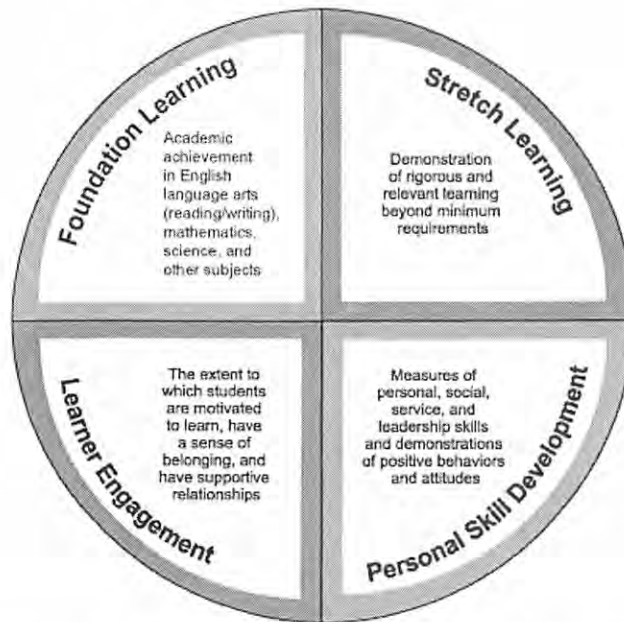
- How does the school identify success?
- Does the school community have a way to measure success?
- How do others measure the school's success?
- How does the school describe an “educated student?”
- Are state tests the only thing that matters? If not, what else does?
- Does being judged only on state tests narrow the focus of work?
- How does the school measure whether school improvements are working?
- How does the school community focus on the needs of students?
- Do current measures of student learning fail to identify some of the “best students?”

The International Center's Learning Criteria to Support 21st Century Learners provides an opportunity for schools to translate their beliefs about teaching and learning into measurable goals. This is an essential and unique aspect of the International Center's model for change, clarifying where schools want to be heading and establishing specific measures to set goals and monitor progress. In the hands of a thoughtful and broad-based school leadership team, the Learning Criteria helps schools clarify mission, prioritize problems and interventions, and critically review school performance. These analyses provide critical rationales for establishing goals and developing action plans. Most important, the data generated using the Learning Criteria reflects the needs of learners in ways that less complex and more traditional measures overlook.

The data generated using the Learning Criteria reflects the needs of learners in ways that less complex and more traditional measures overlook.

The Learning Criteria is designed to provide a robust, comprehensive, and detailed portrait of school performance that clearly maps out a

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route for school improvement efforts. The criteria are organized into four data categories — Foundation Learning, Stretch Learning, Learner Engagement, and Personal Skill Development — that school leaders can use to determine the success of their schools in preparing students for current assessments and future roles and responsibilities. A school should have data indicators in all of the categories, and at least one indicator in each category should apply to the entire student population.

The identification of data indicators for the Learning Criteria is the start of a process that is meant to be dynamic and continuous. Few schools will have all the data necessary to complete the Learning Criteria initially. It takes time and several steps to move through the process. Following is a review of the four Learning Criteria categories with sample indicators:

Foundation Learning refers to achievement in the core subjects of English language arts, mathematics, science, and other subjects identified by the school. Sample data indicators include:

- percentage of students meeting proficiency level on state tests (required)
- average scores on ACT/SAT/PSAT tests

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- achievement levels on standardized tests other than state exams
- percentage of students requiring English language arts/mathematics remediation in college
- follow-up surveys of graduates' academic achievements
- percentage of students graduating from high school in four years
- percentage of students earning a college degree within four years after high school completion
- Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery score

Stretch Learning refers to the demonstration of rigorous and relevant learning beyond minimum requirements through participation and achievement in higher level or specialized courses. Sample data indicators include:

- number of credits required to graduate
- average number of credits earned at graduation
- interdisciplinary work and projects, such as a senior exhibition
- participation in and test scores for International Baccalaureate courses
- average number of college credits earned by graduation through dual enrollment
- enrollment in advanced mathematics or science courses
- enrollment in AP courses, scores on AP exams, and percentage of participants achieving a score of three or higher on a five-point scale
- percentage of students completing career majors or career and technical education programs
- four or more credits in a career area
- four or more credits in arts
- three or more years of foreign language
- value of scholarships earned at graduation
- specialized certificates (e.g., Microsoft, Cisco Academy)

Stretch learning is the most difficult of the criteria, because it compels schools to define how they are stimulating and stretching each and every student, not just the best and brightest. It challenges a school to find data to validate the claim that “all students will . . .” If students truly are being stretched, then they will spend most of their time learning in Quadrants C and D of the Rigor/Relevance Framework.

Learner Engagement is the extent to which all learners: (1) are motivated and committed to learning, (2) have a sense of belonging

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and accomplishment, and (3) have relationships with adults, peers, and parents who support learning. Sample data indicators include:

- student satisfaction surveys
- student risk behaviors
- attendance rate
- tardiness rate
- dropout rate
- discipline referrals
- participation rates in extracurricular activities
- follow-up survey about enrollment in higher education
- percentage of students taking ACT or SAT
- surveys about degree to which teachers know their students
- surveys about positive peer relationships
- graduation rate
- percentage of students going on to two-year colleges
- percentage of students going on to four-year colleges

Students need to be engaged before they can apply higher order, creative thinking skills. They learn most effectively when the teacher makes sense and meaning of the curriculum material being taught. This can only happen if the teacher has created a safe learning environment that encourages students to meet challenges and apply skills to real-world unpredictable situations inside and outside of school.

Personal Skill Development includes: (1) measures of personal, social, service, and leadership skills and (2) demonstrations of positive behaviors and attitudes. Sample data indicators include:

- service learning participation
- students holding leadership positions in clubs or sports
- assessments of personal skills, such as time management, ability to plan and organize work, leadership, being a team player, etc.
- respect for diversity
- teamwork
- trustworthiness, perseverance, and other positive character traits
- conflict resolution
- reduction in number of incidences of student conflict
- follow-up survey of graduates about development of personal skills

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Think about a son or daughter's special friend. Are you more concerned about the friend's grades or his or her character qualities? Personal skill development gets to the heart of what makes a citizen, friend, or community member. What are schools doing to promote these qualities? Are they making leadership opportunities available for all students? Are they creating a curriculum that teaches these skills and making them graduation requirements?

The following checklist summarizes the important practices in building a positive context that will support instructional leadership initiatives. Use it to reflect on the current context in your school and start conversations regarding elements of context that need to be addressed in order to improve instruction.

Context Into Action

**Context for Instructional Leadership Checklist:
Is Your School Ready to Work on Improving Instruction?**

Pervasive	Considerable	Partial	Initiated	Absent	
Staff Relationships					
					Staff know one another.
					Staff support one another when needed.
					Staff take a proactive interest in developing relationships.
					There is open communication and high levels of trust across a school staff.
					New staff are welcomed and mentored into the school community.
					Staff respect one another and frequently share ideas and solve problems collaboratively.
Collaboration					
					Team structures are in place for groups of teachers and administrators to solve problems related to specific school functions.
					Team members are highly committed to goals, placing less priority on individual goals or interests when necessary.
					Teams have specific goals and responsibilities.
					Teams have regular meeting times when all can and do attend.
					Teams have access to data and information needed to make decisions.
					There are convenient and comfortable areas in which teams can meet.
					Teams have established operating norms, including an emphasis on positive reflection and problem solving.
Sense of Purpose and Urgency					
					There is a collective responsibility among all staff toward the success of each student.
					There is a focus on preparing students for a future in which skills and knowledge change.
					There is a sense of urgency that improvement must occur sooner rather than later.
					There is a commitment to provide instruction consistent with the ways the brain learns.
					There are comprehensive sets of data indicators for student achievement.
					Data indicators are consistent with the core beliefs of staff in regard to a well educated student.
					Each teacher sees how his or her instruction relates to the data indicators for student achievement.
					There are specific goals for student achievement.
					Staff conversations focus positively on student achievement and high expectations.





Chapter 5

Target for Instructional Leadership

An Agenda for Instructional Leadership

The target for instructional leadership refers to the agenda for making improvements in instruction. Agenda is not about the practices of instructional leadership, such as classroom walk-throughs or common assessment, but rather about the basic list of items on which instructional leadership is focused.

There is universal agreement that instructional leadership is important. There is less agreement as to what the agenda for instructional leadership should be. Principals and assistant principals are regularly encouraged to adjust their daily activities to spend less time on administrative tasks or disciplining students and more time in classrooms as an instructional leader. But, it is less clear what the agenda should be for principals and assistant principals in the classroom. Do they look for daily objectives written on the whiteboard? Do they look at classroom configuration, seating arrangements, or bulletin board displays? Do they look at the level of participation of students to observe their interest or lack thereof? Do they look for the many aspects of instruction that influence learning or only a few? Do they look for strengths about which to compliment teachers and for weaknesses to provide suggestions for improvement?

Before principals and assistant principals spend precious time in instructional walk-throughs, they need to be clear about what they are looking for, so they can spend time on the most important aspects of instruction. It is important to decide on the agenda for instructional leadership before creating processes for instructional leadership.

The target of instructional leadership, then, is making a clear selection of the aspects of instruction that leaders will look for in walk-throughs and other activities, encouraging staff to address these aspects in teaching and learning, and providing ongoing professional learning and collaboration around this target, or instructional leadership agenda.

One of the challenges for instructional leadership, particularly at the secondary level, is that leaders may lack a depth of content knowledge in the classroom being observed. This is less of a problem at the elementary level, because most elementary principals have been

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elementary teachers and therefore have acquired deep knowledge of the instructional content. However, elementary principals may experience this lack of content knowledge when observing special subject teachers, special education teachers, or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers.

Lack of deep knowledge can be a significant problem for secondary principals. For example, if their teaching background is in social studies, they will be less comfortable when observing math or science classes and reluctant to give advice to the teacher. Consequently, one of the best ways of preparing for instructional leadership is to focus on those characteristics of good instruction in which all principals and assistant principals should have skills and knowledge, without requiring deep content knowledge.

Instructional leadership should also focus on big issues of instruction. When instructional leadership focuses on compliance activities, such as submitting lessons plans to the office, or on classroom management routines, it misplaces the emphasis on the bigger vision of instruction. An objective classroom walk-through that gives equal weight to routine instructional tasks, such as posting objectives and giving daily homework assignments, and to powerful indicators, such as student engagement or high rigor and relevance, sends the wrong message to teachers. Routine tasks may be necessary, but they are not sufficient to elevate the effectiveness of instruction. This is the message of Quadrant D Leadership. Routine compliance instructional tasks fall in Quadrant A leadership. School leaders need to strive for the leadership tasks that are consistent with the higher expectations of adaptive leadership in Quadrant D.

There are six agenda suggestions on which instructional leaders should focus. These areas encompass broad and powerful aspects of teaching and learning. They apply equally across all grade levels and every subject area: core academics, special subjects, and electives. When school leaders focus on these aspects of instructional leadership, they can have profound impacts on teaching and learning. Leaders can develop deep knowledge in these instructional areas and use them to improve instruction in all subjects in all grades without having great content knowledge in the subject being taught. These six areas are:

One of the best ways to prepare for instructional leadership is to focus on those characteristics of good instruction in which all principals and assistant principals should have skills and knowledge,

1. Align with Priority Standards
2. Strive for Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships
3. Use Begin-with-the-End-in-Mind Planning
4. Focus on Literacy
5. Personalize Instruction
6. Engage Students

Align with Priority Standards

The first and most important aspect of instructional leadership is making sure that teachers focus on the “right” student learning. Schools have become standards-driven over the last two decades, using external standards developed nationally by subject areas or internally within their state. Standards provide educators with a comprehensive list of student learning upon which to base classroom instruction. So, the first aspect of instructional leadership is making sure that instruction is aligned with the appropriate standards. This may be partially observed in classroom instruction, but it also requires documentation through cross-reference of instructional units to various standards via curriculum maps. Many school districts also create detailed pacing guides built upon a curriculum map, which place standards to be taught at each grade level on a timeline in which they should be covered. Suggested instructional experiences are often provided to help students learn the standards.

Curriculum maps and pacing guides are excellent tools for ensuring that the standards are covered. They offer the advantage of providing teachers comprehensive information on standards and help to ensure that all teachers in the same grade level or subject move at a common pace. If a student transfers between classes or district schools, fewer gaps will occur in that student's learning. The limitation of pacing guides is that they often reduce the flexibility of teachers to incorporate creative instructional ideas or to tailor instruction to meet the needs of individual students. A better practice is to use curriculum maps and/or pacing guides as a reference on standards to be covered but encourage teachers to apply their own initiative to modify instruction to meet student needs.

Aligning with priority standards is discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

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For classroom walk-throughs, principals can use curriculum maps and pacing guides as references to inquire of teachers which standards they are teaching toward. Teachers should always be able to connect the experiences in the classroom with learning standards.

One limitation of the standards movement is that it gives the impression that all standards are created equal. States put together comprehensive standards documents with the implication that all standards must be covered and that all should be given equal importance when translating them into instruction. This often creates a school culture in which coverage of the topics takes precedence over learning experiences that result in a deepening of student knowledge and understanding.

Teachers should understand this and give greater emphasis to priority standards in their teaching activities. In reality, some standards that are less important might merely be covered, while more important standards would be extensively reinforced through greater application of learning and more challenging learning experiences.

In this era of state testing and accountability requirements, teachers place considerable emphasis on teaching to standards that are directly tested. In many cases, this results in the poor practice of teaching through test rehearsal and practice on released test items. Standardized tests are meant to be a sample measure of student learning in the standards. The assumption of these state tests is that if instruction is based on standards, sampling through standardized test items should indicate the degree to which students are meeting the standards.

Too often, teachers jump to test rehearsal, thus spending less time ensuring that students develop a deep understanding of the important standards. Tests are important in providing a minimum measure of accountability; however, they should not be the sole measure of student success, nor the endpoint of expected learning for the students. Teachers should focus on standards, make sure that they understand the types of questions on the state test, and prepare students through similar learning experiences to elevate their confidence at test taking time.

Some essential standards are not tested, because they do not translate easily into a test format that can be administered on a large scale and scored efficiently and reliably. Learning experiences in which students are expected to write extensively or give verbal presentations that

reflect higher level thinking are difficult to translate into multiple-choice questions. In focusing instruction mainly on state tests, teachers overlook opportunities to develop important standards that may not be tested. The large volume of state standards in every state makes it difficult for teachers to determine what to emphasize and what to give less attention to.

The state-specific Curriculum Matrix also crosswalks state tests to state standards.

Research by the International Center in its National Essential Skills Study (NESS) collected public opinion as to which standards (curriculum topics) are deemed most essential by a wide audience. These essential topics are correlated to each state's standards through the International Center's Curriculum Matrix, which provides a valuable resource for schools on which standards are the highest priority. Decisions about what to emphasize in curriculum should be made schoolwide and not left to individual teachers.

Instructional leaders are responsible for ensuring that instruction is related to the highest priority standards as determined by the district and the school. The Curriculum Matrix provides a powerful resource in helping teachers focus on those standards that are most frequently tested and expected by the public as essential skills for students to learn.

Strive for Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships

There is more on this topic later in the chapter.

Education research emphasizes that to improve performance, teachers should have high expectations for students. Do those high expectations mean getting a passing grade or an A? Are those high expectations satisfied by showing up for school each day, following the rules, and being attentive? Do high expectations mean passing the state test at a proficient level? Or are high expectations typified by teachers who have very difficult proficiency standards and routinely fail large numbers of students who do not measure up to their expectations?

Translating high expectations into daily teacher actions or instructional practices is difficult. What should principals look for as evidence of high expectations when they walk into a classroom? Is it the teacher with great discipline and control of students? Is it the teacher who is asking difficult questions? Is it a teacher with highly engaged students who show great energy and enthusiasm for what they are learning? How does the instructional leader observe high expectations?

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One of the powerful ways that teachers can exhibit high expectations in their teaching is using the vision of rigor and relevance. The notion of greater rigor and relevance has broad-based public support as a desirable goal of student learning.

The public recognizes the importance of education in our constantly changing world. Technological advances, social changes, and economic cycles demand that students be able to solve complex problems and reflect on the impact of their decisions. The public translates this into the necessity that all students learn at higher levels. The concept of academic rigor for every student appropriately describes moving from an education system that requires only memorizing content for short periods of time to one that is rigorous for everyone.

When employers charge that many high school graduates do not possess the skills needed to function in the workplace, they point out that recent graduates are unable to apply knowledge that they once had. Schools typically require students only to recall information on an objective test and then hope they can apply that learning in the real world. Hope is not sufficient for preparing students for the technological workplace and our global economy. Educators must facilitate learning experiences in which students apply their learning in relevant situations, which will deepen their knowledge and give greater assurance that students can apply what they learned in the future. The public expects that learning will be relevant beyond school and that students will have the ability to use their learning in all aspects of their everyday lives.

By studying high performing schools, the International Center has observed that relevance makes rigor possible. Many students will not become actively engaged in learning unless they see the connection between that learning experience and their lives. It is only when they understand the relevance of a learning experience that they will invest significant emotional and cognitive energy in mastering the content.

“Rigor, relevance, and relationships” is a nice alliteration, but it also makes the important connection between relationships and high levels of student learning. Relationships are not an end goal of education, but they deserve to be a target for student learning connected with rigor and relevance. If teachers do not focus on building relationships with students, they may never get an opportunity to take students to higher levels of rigorous and relevant learning. We need only to listen to students to see how important

relationships are to their investment of effort in learning. Students recognize this connection between relationships and the investment and effort they make in their own learning, as shown by feedback gathered through the *We Learn – Student Survey*, conversations with students, and other means.

Use Begin-with-the-End-in-Mind Planning

A complete discussion on this topic appears later in the chapter.

Instructional leadership often focuses on a teacher's preparation for instruction. Good teaching requires good planning. The old adage still holds, "Those who fail to plan, plan to fail." There are many good practices for planning instruction, such as anchoring instruction in learning standards, defining learning objectives, using advanced organizers to connect students to the learning, and selecting powerful learning strategies.

From an instructional leadership perspective, the most important task related to planning is to encourage teachers to plan instruction backwards from the "end" of a particular unit of instruction. Once teachers have defined a set of standards and clarified student learning for a unit, they need to identify the end goal of a lesson and how students will demonstrate their learning. They then specify the assessment: how they will evaluate the quality of student work that demonstrates learning. A quiz or test can be the culminating evidence for a unit of instruction, but more valuable would be a performance, an extended piece of writing, or presentation by which students demonstrate the skills and knowledge they have acquired.

Too many teachers begin planning instruction with the content, then deliver that content to students, give them practice time, and finally quiz them on the knowledge they have acquired. A better practice is for teachers to be clear from the start about how students will demonstrate learning at the end. This is particularly true when teachers are striving for higher levels of rigor and relevance, when identification of how students will demonstrate the learning becomes even more important.

When teachers plan instruction in this manner, it helps them to commit to "learning facilitation" activities in order to get students to higher levels of learning. Teachers are challenged to define the steps it will take to

get students to that final demonstration. They are further challenged to look at any gap between where students are — with all of their diverse backgrounds, prior experiences, and abilities — and where they need to be. This encourages teachers to focus on the students instead of themselves and the content they are teaching. The teacher begins to recognize that the task is to take students from where they are to where he or she wants them to be at the end of the unit. This may seem like a subtle difference, but it is a very powerful one for changing the paradigm of planning instruction.

As principals engage in instructional leadership, their conversations with teachers should elicit whether they identify clearly the end goal for the lesson in their planning process and how that drives the decisions about the instructional strategies and assessments selected to take students through to the culminating performance. Thus, one of the important aspects of instructional leadership is for leaders to ask questions about the end goal of a lesson and how students will demonstrate their learning. This will help ensure that teachers approach their instructional planning with “the end in mind.”

An important aspect of instructional leadership is for leaders to ask teachers about the end goal of a lesson and how students will demonstrate their learning. This helps ensure that teachers approach their instructional planning with “the end in mind.”

Focus on Literacy

The connection between academic success and reading skills may be obvious. And the connection between lifelong success and reading skills may be equally obvious. Yet, an increasing number of students are ill-equipped to read and comprehend the textbooks designed for proficient secondary readers. This reality is recognized by teachers everywhere.

What may not be so widely accepted, however, is the idea that content area teachers can assist the struggling readers in their classes. Does this mean that content teachers should become reading teachers? No. But it does mean that content teachers can structure lessons to assist students to improve their proficiency when they read. Having a reading focus across an entire school is an extremely effective approach to improving learning and student achievement.

In most school districts, formal reading instruction on a regular and systematic basis ends in 6th grade, as the focus on “learning to read”

The Before, During, and After Approach to Reading is provided later in this chapter.

shifts to literary appreciation and “reading to learn.” Reading content material becomes an everyday activity, and yet no consistent effort is made to teach students how to improve their reading comprehension.

While content area teachers are often the first to recognize student with inadequate reading skills, most feel unprepared to address the issue, because they have little training in the teaching of reading skills or strategies. Moreover, with the pressures of proficiency testing, they are concerned that teaching reading strategies will take time away from their primary emphasis – the teaching of course content standards.

All teachers can and should focus on literacy. Literacy can be a powerful target in the question to improve instruction. Following a before, during, and after reading approach, for example, can help teachers to plan purposefully and give students a clear idea of what they need to accomplish in order to become successful lifelong readers.

Personalize Instruction

When teachers are considered facilitators of learning rather than dispensers of knowledge, the focus shifts from teaching to learning. Teachers naturally become more student-focused when they analyze how to take students from where they are to where the teacher wants them to be in their learning.

Everyone remembers significant teachers in their lives who demonstrated sincere caring and encouraged students to strive to be more than they thought they were capable of being. This is the responsibility of teachers: to get to know their students, develop relationships with those students, and inspire them to higher levels of learning. This is what personalization of learning means – making each student feel important, empowered, and able to achieve great things.

New technology has helped teachers find a better lecture, demonstration, or illustration to help students acquire knowledge and learn concepts. But what technology cannot do is get to know the students and motivate and inspire them to high-quality learning that will make a difference in their lives.

Personalization also relies on a number of instructional practices, such as differentiation of learning and modifying instruction to take advantage of individual learning styles and multiple intelligences. These practices break down large group instruction into different types of small group and individual instruction, which are much more effective in getting all students to meet high standards.

Pease see discussion on personalizing instruction later in the chapter.

Instructional leadership efforts should closely examine the degree to which teachers are getting to know their students, building instruction around individual student needs, and differentiating instruction to provide multiple pathways for all students to be successful.

Engage Students

To some, instructional leadership implies examining teachers to evaluate the quality of their work. One of the best indications of teacher quality is observing the students, specifically their level of engagement. In classroom walk-throughs, principals and assistant principals should focus on the students. What are they doing? Are they engaged? Are they being stretched to think at high levels? Do they appear excited about what they are doing, committed to being successful, and rising to the challenge of high level learning experiences?

Instructional leadership should focus on student engagement and not on teacher behavior. Disengaged students will not get very far toward high levels of achievement. Leadership can quantify the level of student engagement by looking at aspects of body language, how students conduct themselves in the classroom, the absence of classroom distractions, and whether or not students maintain a common focus. They can also focus on student responses, noting how frequently students have opportunities to speak and answer questions that require complex thought versus simple facts. Another measure of engagement is the degree to which students demonstrate confidence in their work as well as show enthusiasm for what they are doing.

Student engagement is not demonstrated simply by students sitting in their desks quietly, listening to the teacher and following rules and expectations in the classroom. Full student engagement includes a

There is more on this topic later in the chapter.

cognitive and emotional component as well as a behavioral component. Principals seeking to identify the level of student engagement should not only observe behavior in the classroom, but also talk to students about their learning to determine the degree to which they are cognitively and emotionally engaged. Some questions instructional leaders might ask include:

- Are they committed to the work that they are doing?
- Do they want to be successful?
- Do they find the work meaningful?
- Do they feel they can get additional assistance if needed?

The answers to these questions reveal a deeper level of student engagement that reflects the quality of instruction in the classroom.

There are many practices that lead to increasing student engagement, but an initial responsibility of the instructional leader is to determine the level of student engagement and use that as a basis for determining if additional work needs to be done on changing teaching practice and the school culture.

Focus on Priority Standards

The Curriculum Matrix

In today's schools, educators struggle to answer the question: "What should we teach?" There are so many considerations involving national, state, and district standards and goals. Teachers and administrators often feel overwhelmed by the numerous and sometimes conflicting standards that they are held responsible for teaching. Most curricula have more content than can be taught in the time allotted in a school year.

Along with the challenge of teaching the standards, educators feel the pressure of having all students meet state testing requirements. All the while, schools are being asked to do more to prepare students to participate effectively in the complex world in which they will live and work.

Then there is the significant impact of past practice. Teachers are used to teaching based on their own vision of a well educated student. Sometimes this vision is compatible with state standards and assessments and with

students' postsecondary aspirations; however, this vision is almost never completely covered by them.

There is no simple answer to the question of what to teach in an overcrowded curriculum. However, districts can begin by articulating a clear vision for a quality education based on what students must know and be able to do. Content is considered critical either because students need those skills and that knowledge for future success or because they will be tested on those skills and that knowledge, or both. This vision must be shared by everyone. It serves as the guiding force behind all district efforts.

For more information on
the Curriculum Matrix and
samples of your state data,
please visit
www.LeaderEd.com.

Components of the Curriculum Matrix

To assist educators in determining what should be taught and to improve student performance on state-mandated tests, the International Center developed the Curriculum Matrix. The Matrix crosswalks state standards and learning expectations with state tests and with the results of the National Essential Skills Study.

State Standards

The Curriculum Matrix is based on a state's standards in English language arts, mathematics, and science. Most states divide their standards into general statements of learning expectations and subcategories, such as learning outcomes or grade level expectations, that help to define the standards. The subcategories are called by various names from state to state. The general category is stated as a broad goal or outcome statement or as an identified content area. The subcategories are variously referred to as key ideas, performance indicators, benchmarks, or topics. We will use the word "topic" to refer to the subcategories that lend definition to the standards.

The topics have the greatest impact on instructional decision making since they give more detail regarding what the student must know or be able to do to meet the standard. Often, the topics suggest appropriate instructional activities and may even provide a sample activity.

Educators need to become familiar with the categories and topics in their state standards. It is not enough to read them or be able to recite them.

Educators must be able to express them in words that students and parents can understand. In many schools where student performance has improved, educators have rewritten the standards and provided examples of what the standard means in terms of student performance.

Dialogue among teachers on what the standards mean often reveals different interpretations or a lack of understanding of the intent of the standard. It is important for schools to entertain this type of discussion around the standards.

State Assessment

The second component of the Curriculum Matrix is selected state assessments. All tests required by NCLB in grades 3-8 and at least one high school test in English language arts, math, and science are crosswalked in the Curriculum Matrix.

The topics in the relevant standards are correlated to the testing specifications (blueprints), test item analysis, or released test items. Topics are rated as a high (H), medium (M), or low (L) priority based on the extent to which they are tested.

State testing specifications are organized a variety of ways. Some states indicate in percentages the degree to which a topic is tested; others indicate a number of questions per topic. Still others provide sample booklets with an analysis of the sample test items in relation to the standards addressed.

In the crosswalk of the topics to the test, the priority rating is determined by the topic's relative emphasis on the test. A low rating is given only to topics that do not appear on the state's testing specifications. A medium or high rating means the topic is tested, with a high rating designating either a greater number of test items or questions on the assessment or more weight given to items and questions on that topic. Some states designate specific "power standards" or key topics that should be emphasized without consideration of the number of test items or other numeric weighting. These topics are given a high rating in a crosswalk. Using this correlation, teachers can match their state standards to what is tested.

The Curriculum Matrix is a general guideline that schools can use in determining which topics are considered to be priorities in the state's

testing program. The H, M, or L designations assigned cannot, however, account for the topic priorities or for the needs of individual schools and districts that may choose to put heavier emphasis on other topics based on such variables as past performance on state tests, district curriculum initiatives, or their own instructional needs and priorities.

National Essential Skills Study

The third component of the Curriculum Matrix is the significance of the topics in the standards in relation to the results of the International Center's National Essential Skills Study (NESS). NESS reflects the expectations of educators, members of the business community, parents, and the general public regarding the skills and knowledge students should have when they graduate from high school. Tables I, II, and III show the top 10 topics in English language arts, mathematics, and science, respectively, according to national rankings.

A topic in the state standards is designated as high (H), medium (M), or low (L) rating based on the crosswalk to NESS and the ranking of the related essential skill. The ranges of essential skill rankings were assigned based on the frequency distribution of responses. The ranges of rankings for each of the subject areas are shown below. The letter that precedes each number rank identifies the subject area.

English language arts rankings:

- E1 – E19 = high priority skills (H)
- E20 – E38 = medium priority skills (M)
- E39 – E50 = low priority skills (L)

Mathematics rankings:

- M1 – M16 = high priority skills (H)
- M17 – M42 = medium priority skills (M)
- M43 – M70 = low priority skills (L)

Science rankings:

- S1 – S32 = high priority skills (H)
- S33 – S50 = medium priority skills (M)
- S51 – S85 = low priority skills (L)

A low rating is given if there is no corresponding essential skill for the topic. In many instances, a topic matches more than one essential skill.

The same priorities
apply whether using
state or national
standards.

The rating designation assigned (H, M, or L) is typically the highest ranked essential skill that matched. The crosswalk enables educators to identify topics in their state standards that are aligned with the skills and knowledge the public believes are essential for students' success in their adult lives.

The final step in the Curriculum Matrix crosswalk is to assign an overall priority rating to the topic. This rating is determined based on the topic's correlation to the test and the essential skills. An item is rated low if it is not included on the test and is correlated to a low-priority essential skill or none at all.

Educators can use the priority ratings to make informed decisions about whether to place more or less emphasis on individual topics. Teachers gain confidence that their instructional decisions will help students succeed on tests and that they are consistent with what educators and the community believe a high school graduate should know and be able to do.

Decision making about what to teach and how much time to spend on one topic versus another is facilitated with the Curriculum Matrix. The topics found in the state standards are prioritized for instruction.

Visit www.LeaderEd.com for data on the NESS survey.

Table IV shows a section of the Arizona Curriculum Matrix for English Language Arts, Grade 8. The topics beneath each standard are crosswalked to Arizona's Instrument for Measuring Success (AIMS) and to the essential skills. Each crosswalk is assigned a rating. Finally, an overall priority rating is given based on the topic's rank on the National Essential Skills Study and its emphasis on the state test.

Deciding What Standards to Emphasize in Instruction

Teachers can use the Curriculum Matrix to make better choices about what to teach and how much instructional time to spend on each topic in the standards. Whether or not the topic is tested on a state exam is determined easily by referring to the testing priority rating assigned to the topic. This match between the topics and what is tested gives the teacher a blueprint of the content on the state test. If the item is rated high, then it would likely demand more instructional time than one rated medium or low. Knowing this enables the teacher to plan instruction around the

tested items; thus, students are more likely to demonstrate competence on the test.

Additionally, the Curriculum Matrix provides a summary of what the community expects from educators and students. Topics considered important by the community should receive more instructional emphasis than items rated medium or low. This focused instruction provides students with the knowledge and skills that business, industry, community leaders, and parents believe is essential for high school graduates.

These two priority ratings — the topic's frequency on state tests and its rank on NESS — point the way to the “must teach” content that so many educators struggle to identify in an overcrowded curriculum.

Curriculum Mapping

A student's entire learning experience in school is more productive and meaningful when it is coherent and connected. Every school strives to achieve a meaningful program of learning for its students. To ensure that learning is interconnected, many schools have found curriculum mapping to be helpful. The curriculum mapping process involves charting the content, skills, and assessments delivered for all subjects at all learning levels. The resulting curriculum maps become a tool that teachers can use to identify gaps, overlaps, and duplication in curriculum.

A curriculum map is a communication tool. Mapping can be done across grades to allow teachers to view what students learn from grade to grade, subject to subject, and month to month. On a district level, teachers can see the complete learning picture for students — the education program from kindergarten through grade 12.

This process is used to prioritize the focus areas for learning. Teachers cannot possibly teach everything of value during the time that they facilitate learning for students. With curriculum maps, teachers know what is being taught across the school experience and can compare this with what should be taught in the limited instructional time available. In addition, mapping reveals content that is common across subject areas, giving rise to opportunities for more meaningful learning through interdisciplinary instruction.

The Curriculum Matrix is a valuable resource for the curriculum mapping process, because it matches state standards and topics to state tests and community expectations. Teachers can then match these with their own content and instructional activities. Also, teachers can find the correlation between standard, content area, and community expectations — another valuable checkpoint. Thus, the Curriculum Matrix becomes a resource that provides standards, community expectations, and testing content areas to the curriculum mapping process.

Why Curriculum Mapping Is Important

The most important outcome of curriculum mapping is improved student achievement. By addressing gaps and overlaps in the schoolwide curriculum and focusing instruction on identified and prioritized curricular content areas, the what of the taught curriculum is identified, defined, re-identified, and redefined. Teachers connect assignments, projects, and instructional topics across classrooms and disciplines. Students receive a more coherent, integrated, and meaningful learning experience. Student achievement is bound to improve when instruction is targeted on the content that is essential for students to learn.

Curriculum mapping is useful for long- and short-range planning. By examining curriculum maps, teachers can redesign and modify their instruction to:

- match state and district standards
- locate and eliminate unnecessary repetition of content
- identify and fill gaps
- develop interdisciplinary instruction
- ensure that they teach what will be tested

The Curriculum Mapping Process

The curriculum mapping process begins with teachers recording what occurs in their classrooms over a given period of time. While the design of the curriculum map varies based on the information collected, maps typically contain the following categories:

Table I
English Language Arts – Top 10 Topics
National Essential Skills Study (NESS)

Rank	English Language Arts Skills
E1	Apply writing rules and conventions (grammar, usage, punctuation, sentence structure, and spelling).
E2	Read for main ideas and supporting details and discriminate important ideas from unimportant ideas to aid comprehension.
E3	Follow oral directions.
E4	Use resources (dictionary, grammar books, thesaurus, online references, etc.) as needed to edit.
E5	Develop processes or techniques for building vocabulary, decoding unfamiliar words/ texts, and understanding or remembering information by using such strategies as context clues, word structure, letter-sound relationships, word histories, and mnemonics.
E6	Collect and focus thoughts about the writing activity (brainstorming, listing, drafting, etc.).
E7	Research information from a variety of sources and draft a well-organized, accurate, and informative report or essay that engages an audience and addresses its needs.
E8	Prepare and deliver individual speeches that address the needs of the target audience by gathering information, rehearsing, making eye contact, speaking loudly enough, and delivering information in a well-organized fashion.
E9	Organize supporting detail in logical and convincing patterns that focus on audience and purpose.
E10	Participate in (sometimes leading) one-on-one or group discussions by asking questions, asking for clarification, taking turns speaking, agreeing and/or disagreeing courteously, making informed judgments, and working toward a common goal.

Table II
Mathematics – Top 10 Topics
National Essential Skills Study (NESS)

Rank	Mathematics Skills
M1	Perform operations fluently with positive and negative numbers, including decimals, ratios, percents, and fractions, and show reasoning to justify results
M2	Understand and apply basic algebraic properties (commutative and associative laws of addition and multiplication, distributive law of multiplication over addition, and identities and inverses).
M3	Use proportional reasoning to solve real-world problems.
M4	Understand the properties of and apply parallel, perpendicular, and intersecting lines in problem-solving situations.
M5	Examine problem-solving situations involving simple probability and use probabilistic reasoning to compare and communicate the theoretical or empirical likelihood of events.
M6	Demonstrate understanding of, and accurately apply, place value to round off numbers.
M7	Simplify and solve algebraic equations by identifying and using the correct order of operations and techniques necessary to carry out the solution.
M8	Solve problems using units of metric measure and convert between metric and English/customary units.
M9	Compute the perimeter and area of common two-dimensional figures.
M10	Understand and apply a systematic methodology or procedure (e.g., direct or indirect measurement, direct or indirect proof, inductive or deductive reasoning) to model and solve problems.

Table III
Science – Top 10 Topics
National Essential Skills Study (NESS)

Rank	Science Skills
S1	Know and apply the principles of scientific inquiry for generating knowledge, including prediction, estimation, developing hypotheses, drawing conclusions, evaluation, and following ethical principles and professional procedures.
S2	Identify and understand the structure and parts that compose the human body systems (e.g., cardiovascular, nervous, reproductive, lymphatic, muscular regions).
S3	Use the Scientific Method to collect data and draw conclusions. Understand that all scientific conclusions and theories are subject to modification as new data are collected and reviewed publicly by peers and that all scientific ideas must satisfy common criteria including the ability to be tested.
S4	Make observations and accurate and precise measurements using senses, tools, and technology.
S5	Examine how natural events cause environmental change and impact populations.
S6	Understand the concepts of force and motion as they apply to simple machines (e.g., levers and pulleys).
S7	Examine how humans, through technology, cause environmental change by disrupting the equilibrium or balance of nature. Critique ways to improve environmental protection through education, research, laws, and conservation and judge the effectiveness of conservation practices and preservation techniques on environmental quality
S8	Explain the processes involved in the water cycle (evaporation, condensation, precipitation, transpiration, surface runoff, percolation, etc.).
S9	Differentiate between renewable and non-renewable resources (e.g., water, land, soil, minerals, and air) and understand the value of resource management, such as the reintroduction of wildlife, ocean fisheries management, and fire ecology. Determine energy sources and uses, including distribution, energy conversion, and energy costs and depletion.
S10	Understand that science and technology merge to meet the needs of society and that technology can often have unforeseen impacts on people and the environment that may be complicated to correct.

- state standards/benchmarks/performance indicators
- timeframe — by calendar week, month, semester, year
- content/skills — what students are expected to know and be able to do
- procedures/topics — how content is taught
- evidence of learning — the degree of competency is suggested, introduced, reinforced, or mastered
- assessments — how competency is measured; what is the evidence of a student's ability to demonstrate competency
- instructional materials and resources

Table IV
Excerpt from a Curriculum Matrix

Column 1	Column 2		Column 3	Column 4	Column 5
Arizona English Language Arts Standards	National Essential Skills Study (NESS)		AIMS Test	NESS	Overall Priority
Essentials – Grade 8	Rank	Skill			
Standard 2: Writing Students effectively use written language for a variety of purposes and with a variety of audiences.					
W-E1 Use correct spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar and usage, along with varied sentence structure and paragraph organization, to complete effectively a variety of writing tasks.	E1	Apply writing rules and conventions, (grammar, usage, punctuation, sentence structure, and spelling).	M	H	H
	E20	Understand the nature and purpose of a variety of technical formats (essays, business letters, memos, investigative reports, brochures, critiques, instructions, policy statements, technical proposals, lab reports, etc.) and write in these formats.			
W-E2 Write a personal experience narrative or creative story that includes a plot and shows the reader what happens through well-developed characters, setting, dialog, and themes and uses figurative language, descriptive words and phrases.	E45	Create an original piece of literature or poetry for personal enjoyment or to share with other readers.	M	L	M

Curriculum maps answer such questions for teachers as:

- What has the student been taught before coming to my class?
- What is the student expected to learn during my class?
- Do I need to teach this?
- How well does my curriculum match state and/or district standards?

It is important to have teachers participate in the creation of the maps. Teachers should identify and agree on categories, or mapping areas. Resources needed in this process include district goals, local syllabi, state standards, and statewide assessment information along with the teachers' plans and instructional units.

Curriculum mapping is not an easy task. Teachers must sometimes let go of content and instructional activities that are dear to them. These successful lessons, which are proven motivators for students and enjoyable to facilitate, now do not fit the content areas mapped. Some teachers may also feel guilty when they acknowledge what is really happening, or not happening, in their classrooms.

Designing Curriculum Mapping

There are a number of ways to organize curriculum mapping. Schools may have a map of each elementary and intermediate grade level as well as subject areas at the high school level. Maps may be created by standards area. These would show the correlation between the standards in a particular academic area and what is taught.

Another form of mapping is interdisciplinary. This map might depict the standards in one academic area, with teachers in other academic disciplines doing the mapping. For example, writing may be thought of as everyone's business to teach. Thus, all teachers would respond to the writing standards in relation to what they teach and what students learn. This process becomes particularly beneficial at the high school level. By asking every discipline to cross-reference its academic area to English and math standards, at the minimum, all teachers become aware of the requirements in these two core academic areas.

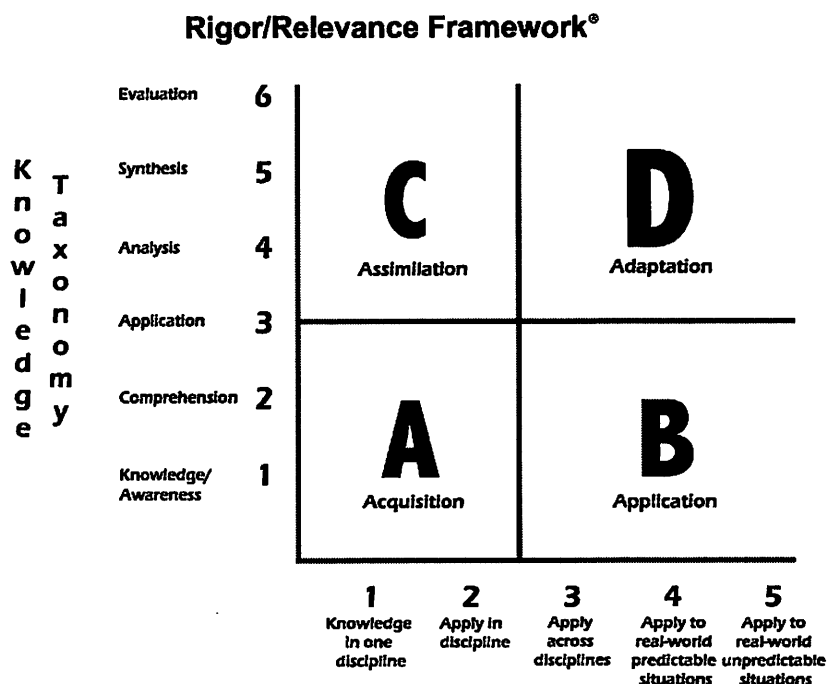
An extremely revealing exercise is to have teachers in career and technical education (CTE) programs map their content, skills, and processes with the academic standards in core academic disciplines. Schools that have done this are amazed at the number of academic standards that are introduced, reinforced, or mastered in the CTE programs. This finding builds support for these programs in a schedule that is already filled with many academic requirements.

Strive for Rigorous and Relevant Learning

The International Center has created a tool for quantifying rigor and relevance and moving rigor and relevance from a fuzzy concept into an objective practice. Using the Knowledge Taxonomy from Benjamin Bloom, which many teachers already understand, is an effective way to identify and move instruction to higher levels of rigor. However, the Knowledge Taxonomy only measures rigor and fails to address levels of relevance. Moving to higher levels of relevance is defined by the Application Model, which describes the continuum from just acquiring knowledge in a discipline to complex applications in the real world. These two scales combine to define the four quadrants of learning.

Quadrant A is low rigor and low relevance, but not low importance. It defines the fundamental learning that exists in all disciplines; basic vocabulary, basic concepts and fundamental skills. Quadrant B learning moves to higher degrees of application of learning in which students get a chance to use their knowledge and skills. Programs such as CTE and subjects such as art and music naturally teach through application. Academic subjects such as English language arts, math, and science can likewise provide more instruction at higher degrees of application to not only ensure that students retain their learning, but also to increase the level of student engagement. When students experience and recognize the relevance of what they're learning they naturally become more engaged.

Quadrants C learning is defined by high levels of the Knowledge Taxonomy in which students are expected to think creatively, critically, analyze, reflect, and evaluate their work. Quadrant D is defined by the combination of high rigor of Quadrant C and relevance of Quadrant B. In this quadrant, students are expected to tackle challenging real-world problems and to think critically and creatively to solve those problems.



Application Model

Learning in this quadrant is highly engaging; it also ensures that students have learned their skills thoroughly and have a chance to apply them in real-world problems.

If we expect students to be able to apply their learning once they leave school, which is what the public expects of us, we must provide more students experiences in Quadrant D learning. In addition, the rapidly changing world elevates the importance of education for students to be successful in the workplace and in their community; they require a higher level of skills than any previous generation. That is the challenge to schools — to develop high rigor, high relevant learning.

Instructional leaders can ensure that teachers have high expectations for students when they design instruction for Quadrant D of the Rigor/Relevance Framework.

Further information on instructional planning is available in the resource kit, *Using the Rigor/Relevance Framework for Planning and Instruction*.

Use Begin-with-the-End-in-Mind Planning

Instructional planning is often divided into three components: curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Curriculum is what students will learn, instruction is how students will learn, and assessment is in what way and how well students are expected to demonstrate what they have learned as a result of the instruction.

Traditionally, these three elements have been approached as three separate steps, one following the other, as shown in the following figure. Many teachers learned to plan their lessons using this linear model: decide what to teach, design how to teach it, and then decide how to measure student achievement.

Teaching also proceeds in a linear manner. Topics are introduced one after the other, pausing only long enough for a chapter or unit test. Particularly at the secondary level, instructional planning focuses on covering the topics at a uniform rate of speed.

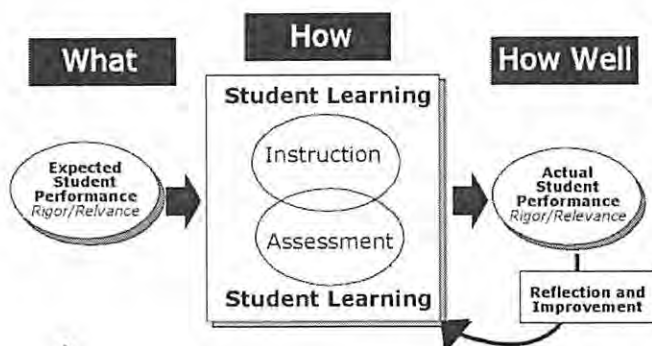
Traditional Planning



Recent research and innovations in teaching and learning have concluded that curriculum, instruction, and assessment are not separate and linear but interrelated. Good learning takes place when there is a dynamic linkage of instruction and assessment. In a rigor/relevance learning model, instruction and assessment, in particular, should have significant overlap, as shown in the following figure.

Student learning is the result of a combination of facilitated instructional experiences and assessments, as shown in the Rigor/Relevance Learning Model. Rigorous and relevant student learning starts with a specific expected student performance using the Rigor/Relevance Framework. After completing a unit, the teacher can reflect on the actual level of student performance and decide if it is necessary to modify and attempt to improve the instruction and assessment to attain higher levels of performance.

Rigor/Relevance Learning Model



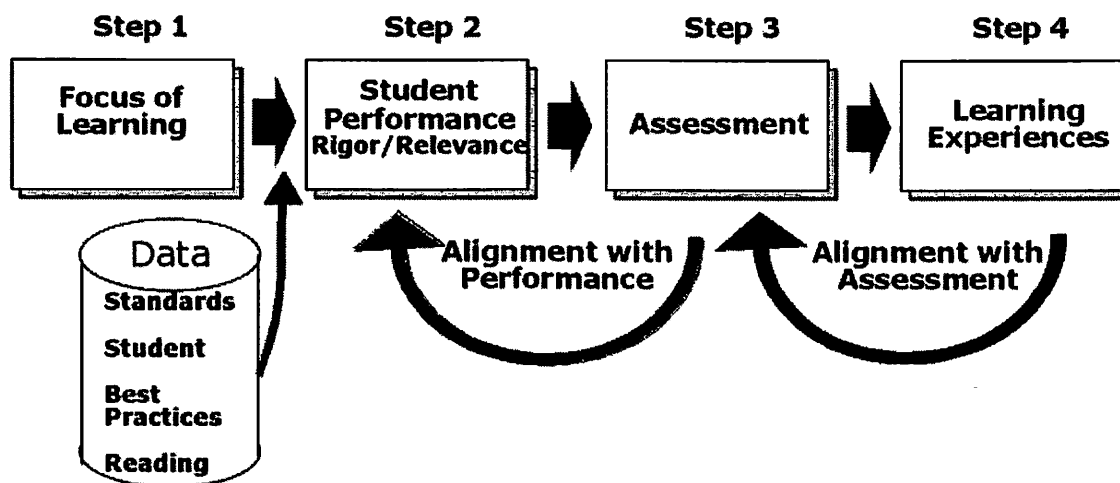
Curriculum planning does occur prior to instruction and assessment. Without effective planning, there is very little likelihood that students will achieve the expected rigor and relevance. Curriculum planning is a complex process. It is much more than simply picking out a work of literature or a textbook chapter and deciding that it would make a good instructional topic. Teacher experience and data should be considered in order to make thoughtful decisions about instruction and assessment.

When teachers hear the word “curriculum,” they generally think of unit or lesson plans that describe teacher procedures and/or student activities that would take place in a classroom. It is natural for teachers to think about these plans and immediately jump to imagine what they would look like in their classrooms. Teachers are under constant pressure to present activities that engage students, and there is precious little time to do much planning — such is the structure of the U.S. education system.

While curriculum must lead to unit plans and lessons plans, curriculum planning does not begin with them. Teachers who begin and end their curriculum planning by writing a lesson plan miss important curriculum decisions.

The curriculum is a means to an end: a performance by the student. Teachers typically focus on a particular topic (e.g., volume of three-dimensional figures), use a particular resource (e.g., Periodic Table of Elements), and choose specific instructional methods (e.g., problem-

Planning Steps for Rigorous and Relevant Instruction



based learning) to cause learning that meets a given standard. However, each of these decisions is actually a step in a learning process that should end in a performance by the student. Student activity without an end performance in mind is busywork. Instruction, no matter how engaging or intellectual, is only beneficial if it ends with students demonstrating their knowledge and skills resulting from the learning experience. A performance approach to curriculum planning starts with the specific student performance.

A curriculum process that begins with the end in mind is referred to by Wiggins and McTighe in *Understanding by Design* as “backwards design.” It may seem backwards to many teachers who move “forward” with textbooks, favored lessons, and time-honored activities rather than deriving those tools from targeted goals or standards. The Understanding by Design model is one of a number of excellent approaches to designing curriculum with the clear goal of student learning as the first step. Regardless of the model selected, teachers should start with the end — the desired results (goals or standards) — and then derive the curriculum from the evidence of learning (performances) called for by the standard and from the teaching needed to equip students to perform.

Backwards design may be thought of as purposeful task analysis: Given a task to be accomplished, how do we get there? What kinds of lessons and practices are needed to master key performances? This approach to curriculum design is a logical systems approach, but it runs contrary to conventional habits, whereby teachers think in terms of a series of activities or how best to cover a topic.

This backward approach to curricular design also departs from another common practice: thinking about assessment as something to plan at the end, after teaching is completed. Rather than creating assessments near the conclusion of a unit of study (or relying on the tests provided by textbook publishers, which may not assess state standards completely or appropriately), backwards design calls for teachers to think about the work the student will produce and how it might be assessed as they begin to plan a unit or course.

Curriculum planning is a complex process that occurs prior to instruction and assessment. Without effective planning, there is little likelihood that students will achieve the expected rigor and relevance.

Planning Steps

There are four major steps in planning rigorous and relevant instruction:

1. Define the focus of instruction
2. Create the student performance
3. Design the assessment
4. Develop the learning experiences

The four steps are presented in the order in which ideal planning should occur.

Step 1 - Focus of Instruction

What defines or drives the learning?

- What is the subject, grade level, topic, area, theme, setting, or concepts?

- What standards are addressed in this learning?
- What are the important connections (standards, other disciplines)?

Step 2 - Student Performance

What are students expected to know, do, or be like and at what level of rigor and relevance?

- What student work will be used to facilitate learning?
- Is the student work connected to student learning?
- Under what conditions will students do the required work?

Step 3 - Assessment

How will you assess desired student performance?

- What is the final performance assessment?
- What are important formative assessments during the lesson?

Step 4 - Learning Experience

What activities will enable students to achieve student performance?

- What is the students' prior knowledge? Do you need a pre-assessment?
- What big ideas are essential for students to learn?
- What are key vocabulary words to learn?
- What will be a launching activity?
- What are the primary instructional strategies you will use?
- What are the reading strategies you will use?
- What are the steps in the lesson? For the teacher? For the student?
- What adaptations do you need to make for individual students?
- What resources are needed?

Focus on Literacy

In order to foster reading development, teachers need to assist students in learning how to use strategies intuitively, so students can move from unaware, barely proficient, and frustrated novices to unconsciously competent readers. Many elements should be weighed into such a strategic reading program and curriculum. Education leaders who want to implement a strategic reading initiative can draw upon a wealth of existing specialists, ideas, successful practices, how-to books, and other sources. Following is the Before, During, and After Approach to Reading.

Before-, During-, and After-Approach to Reading

Following a framework of before, during, and after reading strategies helps teachers to plan purposefully and to give students a clear idea of what they need to accomplish in order to become successful lifelong readers. The Before, During, and After Approach to Reading contains the following strategic elements:

Before Reading

Activating background knowledge: Students are taught to elicit prior knowledge of the reading topic. They build background relating to prior knowledge. Some examples of questions that students can use to inventory their prior knowledge might include:

- What do I already know about mammals?
- What have I read, heard, or watched about mammals?
- What other words do I think of when I see the word mammals?

Investigating text structure: Students are taught to analyze the book or material and its print features, the layout, and the illustrations. They are taught to consider the language and the literary features of the text. They learn to discriminate between the narrative and the expository text.

- Does the author use headings and subheadings?
- Does the author use illustrations, graphs, tables, or maps?
- Are important words highlighted or italicized?

This strategy is taken from
*Strategic Reading in the
Content Areas*, published by
the International Center.

Setting a purpose for reading: Students are taught to question themselves about why they are reading the material, such as asking:

- What is my goal?
- What questions do I need to answer after reading?
- What will I do with the information from the reading?
- What do I want to learn from reading this?

After students determine their own purpose for reading, they are then able to select their own reading style to best suit the purpose. They decide whether to skim, scan for specific information, or read and reread to recall details. They are also taught to question what the author's purpose was for writing the selection.

Predicting the text content: Students are taught how to form ideas about what is going to happen in the text. They are taught how to combine and use the information in the material they are reading or viewing and the information they have in their heads to make meaningful guesses about the material.

- What do I know about the topic already?
- How can I combine my knowledge with the clues of the text?
- How will making predictions help me understand this material better?

Reviewing and clarifying vocabulary: Students are taught how to use word solving strategies to pronounce a word correctly and understand its meaning.

- How do the other words in the sentence give me clues to pronounce this word?
- How do the other words in the sentence give me clues to understand the meaning of the unknown word?
- How does the sentence before and the sentence after help me solve the unknown word in this sentence?

During Reading

Establishing the purpose for each part of the reading: Students are taught to ask themselves why they are reading a particular text — whether it is to retell, answer questions, gather information, make comparisons, or to get the main idea.

- What is my purpose for reading this chapter?
- Do I need to define and understand the meaning of terms?
- Do I need to identify the main idea?
- Do I need to participate in a discussion?
- Do I need to summarize important ideas?
- Do I need to confirm predictions?

Self-monitoring: Students are taught how to check themselves while they are involved in the process of reading material. They ask themselves if what they are reading makes sense and sounds right. They learn how to self-correct to monitor their own accuracy.

- How does what I am reading fit with what I am understanding?
- What information do I need to understand better?
- Did what I just read sound right?
- Did what I just read make sense?
- Do I need to go back and reread to understand?

Visualizing: Students are taught how creating mental images help them to construct details leading to comprehension.

- Can I see in my head what the author is trying to explain?

Summarizing: Students are taught to “stop and think” during their reading to answer who or what they read about, where the action was taking place, and what was happening involving the characters on a particular page or in the chapter.

- What were the most important ideas on the page I just read?
- How were the ideas related to each other?

Confirming or rejecting predictions: Students are taught how to revise predictions made before reading, using the information gathered during their reading. They are taught how to locate evidence to assist them in confirming or rejecting the predictions they made.

- Were my predictions confirmed or rejected?
- What did I find out that was different from my prediction?

Identifying and clarifying key ideas: Students are taught how to reflect on information, ideas, and words as they read. They learn how to think about what they are reading. They learn to reread for clarity and to distinguish between important and the less important information contained in the text.

- What was important in what I just read?
- What did I already know, and what was new information?
- How can I put the information together to get a deeper understanding?

Questioning: Students are taught to use the text to answer different kinds of questions. They learn to distinguish among literal, inferential, and critical types of questions.

- Is this a question that I can go back and find “right there” in the text?
- Is this a question that I need to use information I already have and combine it with clues from the text?
- Is this a question that requires my opinion and my reasons for that opinion?

After Reading

Assessing if the purpose was met: Students are taught how to think back to the before-reading process and decide if the purpose was met and what to do if they did not accomplish the goal.

- Were my purposes for reading met?
- Did the author accomplish his or her purpose?

Paraphrasing: Students are taught how to interpret and restate the author's ideas, using both information from the reading and their own knowledge. They are taught to "rewrite" the ideas in their own words.

- How can I put this into my own words and not leave out important ideas?

Identifying main ideas and details: Students are taught first how to identify the facts or ideas that are relevant to understanding and then how to use that information to select the primary focus of the text.

- What is the most important idea in the chapter?
- What ideas support the most important idea?

Making comparisons: Students are taught how to compare and contrast information within a text as well as between texts. They are taught how to look for similarities and differences.

- What other information is this like?
- How is this information different from other ideas in this book?
- How is this information similar to other sources?
- How is this information different from other sources?

Connections: Students are taught how to draw on their own experiences to help clarify the text. They connect to experiences or relationships to further construct meaning.

- How can I use this new information combined with information I already know?
- What, where, when, why, and how did I see or use this information before?
- How can what I know help me understand these new ideas?

Drawing conclusions: Students are taught how to use the text or visual clues plus the information they already have in their heads to reach a conclusion.

- What has the text implied?
- How can I use the clues and ideas in my head to understand the text?

Summarizing: Students are taught how to give a brief statement about the main parts of the text, story, or chapter. They are taught to extract and organize the important information gained from their reading.

- What information do I need to remember?
- How can I sort the ideas to make good sense?
- Which ideas can I connect together?

Analyzing: Students are taught to make judgments about the material read and to form opinions, along with being taught how to support their opinions using explicit information from the reading.

- How did the information all fit together?
- What reaction do I have to the author's stance?
- Why do I feel the same/differently about the topic?

Personalize Instruction

Personalizing learning involves using a set of instructional strategies and approaches that take into account the individual uniqueness of each student. Teachers may be committed to common learning goals, but getting every student to achieve those goals requires personalizing the process. These strategies include:

- Make each student feel unique.
- Involve parents.
- Connect to the youth culture.
- Recognize cultural differences.
- Consider the student point of view.
- Be aware of different learning styles.
- Attend to students with special needs.
- Differentiate instruction.
- Intervene early.

Make Each Student Feel Unique

All of us have experienced listening to a speaker that caused us to be intensely engaged — a politician at a rally, a religious leader preaching a sermon, an actor in a movie or play, or a poet reading a passage. In these instances, we feel that the speaker is speaking to each of us personally. The message, mannerism, and language all combine to create a unique personal experience.

Teachers may not have the gift of oratory and charisma of a political leader or actor, but they should work to make their teaching seem personal to each student. Techniques, such as making eye contact, calling students by name, and using positive personal examples are all good ways to make students feel special.

Give individual attention to each student by having 60-second conferences. While students are working at their desks, walk around the room. Stop by each desk and whisper a comment to the student about the work he or she is doing. When students are absent, tell them you missed them and make them feel that they are an important part of the class. If a student is absent because of a long illness, have the class write get-well messages and mail them. If a student experiences a death in the family, teach the class how to write sympathy notes.

Try to give students choices and respect the choices they make. For instance, give a general writing assignment such as writing about a memorable childhood experience. Then, help students brainstorm ways in which they can handle the assignment individually. Sometimes allow students to choose their own reading material within guidelines that you set. Students are more invested in their own learning if they are given opportunities to make choices within boundaries.

Connect to the Youth Culture

One effective way of raising engagement in any subject is to incorporate youth culture in the classroom. Research tells us that for the brain to learn, it needs to make a connection for meaning. New information needs to have a “hook” to be retained as important knowledge. Students watch and hear what the teacher is saying in the classroom, but if none of that

experience is perceived as important or connected to what already has been learned or experienced, it becomes wasted time.

As children grow, their brain is constantly developing patterns of learning that are connected to strong emotions — pleasure, fun, belonging, independence, and aspirations that reflect the youth culture and how they spend their time. Music, television, advertising, sports, Internet chat, friends, clothes, family, and neighborhood conditions are all strong influences.

Hip hop, for example, has become the defining social movement of today's generation. A generation of youth — urban, rural, racially diverse, poor and rich — define themselves according to their pop culture idols. Youths follow the trials and tribulations of hip-hop and teenage pop stars with a degree of intensity and commitment historically reserved for religious worship.

Some worry that this has created a generation of youth overly concerned with material gain, a distorted view of gender relations, and broader lack of community responsibility. Every generation of adults cringes at the characteristics of whatever the current youth culture is at the time. One difference today is that ubiquitous and instantaneous media make counterculture more visible than in any previous generation. But teachers can use pop culture as a tool to turn learning into a more engaging experience. For example, students could create a rap song to learn vocabulary words or compare lyrics of a popular song to a theme in classic literature.

Recognize Cultural Differences

The use of classroom “cultural relevancy” tactics to engage minority students is essential to help them do better in school. The National Urban Alliance for Effective Education has taken the lead in conducting nationwide teacher training workshops to show thousands of K-12 educators how to improve the performance of underachieving students by drawing out student strengths and incorporating their culture into learning activities.

The National Urban Alliance describes an example of “getting it wrong” when an inner city teacher tried to explain the geometrical concept of a

slope by using skiing terms. His students were hard-pressed to get the notion of a “bunny slope” — skiing jargon for a gentle decline where beginning skiers start. Skiing was not part of this group’s cultural context. Not one of these kids in his classroom had any clue what he was talking about. Another inner city middle school math teacher did better working with students on the subject of ratios and proportions. This teacher asked students to record the number of alcohol billboards and liquor stores they passed on their way to school and calculate the number of each per block. This was their cultural knowledge. The National Urban Alliance maintains an extensive list of resources to assist teachers in adding culturally appropriate learning experiences.

Teachers also can design some lessons and activities that incorporate strong African-American or Hispanic cultural values of community and teamwork and the contrast with individualism and competition as primary strategies for success. Be willing to discuss issues concerning gender/ racial bias, discrimination, racial profiling, etc. Take a stand against social injustices. Create a multicultural atmosphere in the classroom. Exhibit pictures of all racial groups as well as students with disabilities. Remember to balance the genders. Get to know your students, their communities, and their cultures. Make connections and celebrate the diversity of backgrounds.

Consider the Student Point of View

Good teachers know their content areas deeply and thoroughly. Their role is to help students acquire appropriate knowledge in a particular subject. To do that effectively, they need to look at their content areas not from what they know, but based on what the student knows.

Students should be given the opportunity to construct learning by developing their own links to new knowledge through self-discovery. Just as our ancestors explored their world and learned what items were edible and where danger existed, so too can students explore their world through carefully designed instruction.

A personalized teaching strategy might be to start a class with inquiry-based instruction instead of reading long passages or term memorization. Start with observations. This creates a more personalized approach in

which students are more engaged in active learning as they move into the heart of a lesson.

Be Aware of Different Learning Styles

Another aspect of personalizing learning is recognizing the unique learning styles of students. Understanding the different ways that students learn, interact with, and process information can help teachers modify instructional strategies so that all students have an opportunity to succeed. The learning styles theory is rooted in the classification of psychological types and based on research, which has shown that, as the result of heredity, upbringing, and environment, different individuals have a tendency to perceive and process information differently. There are many categories of learning style theory models, which all have some validity. The most common model incorporates three learning styles: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic.

Visual learners:

- need to see it to know it
- have a strong sense of color
- may have artistic ability
- often have difficulty with spoken directions
- might overreact to sounds
- might have trouble following lectures
- often misinterpret words

Auditory learners:

- need to hear it to know it
- may have difficulty following written directions
- might have difficulty with reading
- might have difficulty with writing
- may have trouble reading body language and facial expressions

Kinesthetic learners:

- prefer hands-on learning
- often can assemble parts without reading directions
- have difficulty sitting still
- learn better when physical activity is involved
- may be well coordinated

Teachers should design instruction to connect with all learning styles, using various combinations of experience, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation. Varying teaching strategies ensures that students will learn in a manner compatible with their own learning preferences. It also expands the repertoire of alternative learning strategies experienced by the entire class.

In surveying students and building an inventory of interests, teachers can obtain a better sense on how to modify instruction and activities to enhance their students' interests.

Differentiate Instruction

To understand what differentiation is, it is helpful first to understand what it is not. Differentiation is not planning individual lessons for each student every day. It does not mean teaching to the middle group and giving more work to accelerated students and less work to underachieving students. Finally, differentiation is not placing students in cooperative learning structures and failing to hold them accountable for individual roles and achievement.

In cooperative learning groups, differentiation engages each student in an individual role based on his or her knowledge, learning style, and interests that contribute to group learning. Differentiated instruction requires teachers to be flexible in their approach to teaching and to adjust the curriculum to student need rather than expecting the students to adapt themselves to the curriculum. Ways to differentiate instruction include:

See Chapter 9 for more on differentiated instruction.

Differentiate the content. Pretest students to identify those who require direct instruction and those who can move quickly to apply the concept/knowledge/skill. This pre-assessment should provide a clear representation of knowledge and skills that entail more than a litany of facts. It should measure what the student knows, understands, and is able to do.

Differentiate the teaching process and activities. Vary learning activities or instructional strategies to provide alternative methods for students to explore the concepts.

Differentiate the product. Vary the complexity of the results that students must produce to demonstrate mastery of the concept.

Differentiate by manipulating the environment to accommodate individual learning styles. Change the lighting or sound levels, eliminate visual distractions, or provide a more casual seating arrangement for students. Vary teaching strategies to ensure that students will at least occasionally learn in a manner compatible with their learning preference.

Attend to Students with Special Needs

Often, the group representing the most serious gap in education performance has been students with disabilities. While many plausible explanations are offered for the size of this performance gap, there also is growing recognition that it should not be as wide as it is. One aspect of personalizing learning is making sure that in the course of classroom instruction the unique learning needs of students with disabilities are addressed.

The International Center believes that:

- all children can learn
- not every child with a disability can meet general education standards, but most can
- more students with disabilities can meet standards than we have expected

Instructional Leadership — Quadrant D Leadership Practices

- many more students with disabilities can meet standards than have so far
- the expectations of the education system for these students is too low

Many general and special educators were trained to have lower expectations regarding the potential of students receiving special education services. Furthermore, these educators have a long way to go in understanding the world in which today's students will live. As understanding increases, it will reinforce why schools must improve performance to give students with disabilities greater opportunities to reach the vision the laws have set out for them.

Following are some of the important strategies that teachers and administrators can use in attending to students with special needs.

- Consider the general education teacher as the first line of support for students with disabilities. Ownership of student progress by these teachers is important.
- Develop a culture of achievement regardless of students' ability levels. Arrange ongoing, explicit discussions with students, parents, teachers, guidance counselors, and administrators regarding high expectations for academic performance.
- Ensure constant communication between teachers and parents concerning assignments and student progress via e-mail, phone, mail, and face-to-face meetings.
- Arrange for additional time on tasks in courses that are challenging for students with disabilities. Plan instructional sessions before and after school with general education teachers to learn content and skills.
- Assist special education teachers (or designees) in understanding the content areas in which they are supporting students. Have them participate in content-area focused professional development activities, meetings, curriculum development activities, etc.
- Provide courses that may extend beyond one semester or one year to provide students with more learning and practice opportunities.
- Expect students with disabilities to be engaged independently after school hours with assignments and studying.

- Develop a method to assist students with the organization of their program/courses, such as planners and notebooks.
- Create study guides for students. This should be a shared responsibility of general education and special education teachers.
- Teach students to develop their own study guides for unit exams. This process will enable students to prioritize and organize information independently.

Intervene Early

Schools that have the most success with struggling students do much more than fail students who do not meet expectations. Reaching the goal of all students succeeding requires having several levels of intervention — and early intervention is key. These levels of intervention are components of personalizing learning. Teachers must monitor student progress frequently with formal and informal assessment and use this information to help decide what to teach. Share assessments results with students, parents, and tutors.

Possible academic interventions early in the school year include:

- three-week academic progress reports mailed to all parents
- extracurricular coaches and advisers who serve as academic support
- monitoring academic success on a regular basis
- quarterly academic improvement awards granted to students
- a special effort to make one positive telephone call each quarter to the parents of these students, who might never have received a phone call from school bearing good news
- tutoring during lunch, before or after school by teachers, upper-class students, parent volunteers, retired teachers, etc.
- special Saturday literacy improvement classes
- individual students meet with an entire grade level team that joins forces to present a united front
- special preparation sessions for state tests

Engage Students

Simply telling or encouraging students to engage themselves in their class work is seldom enough. The engagement-based learning and teaching (EBLT) approach provides the foundation for developing and strengthening student engagement and the overall learning process. This foundation is built through specific principles, habits, skills, and strategies. All members of the school community can join forces to develop schoolwide practices that cultivate student engagement beliefs, values, feelings, motivation, behavioral habits, and skills that are at the crux of high levels of student engagement.

The three domains of student engagement unfold in EBLT as follows:

- **Cognitive domain** consists of beliefs and values.
- **Emotional domain** consists of motivation and feelings.
- **Behavioral domain** consists of habits and skills.

In the EBLT approach, teachers and parents work systematically across all three domains to ensure an integrated approach to cultivate and support student engagement at the highest level. The core habits of student achievement and other skill sets, such as organizational skills and self-discipline, also will be developed in the student through this approach.

Laying the Foundation for Student Engagement

Regardless of the time it takes to make significant changes to improve student engagement practices, educators should become familiar with the two basic elements that together provide the roadmap for teachers to focus on and facilitate student engagement. These elements are preconditions and pedagogy.

Preconditions

Preconditions are the factors that must be in place even before classroom instruction begins. The factors are:

Learning relationships. Most students will not do their best in classes when they feel that teachers do not have an interest in them or care about

their future. Students can sense whether the teacher cares or is simply “going through the motions.” All of the characteristics that we know about building relationships are essential to contributing to highly engaged classroom instruction. Students show increased effort in classroom activities when teachers take an interest in students as individuals, get to know them by name, and talk to them not only in the classroom but during other activities in the school as well.

Creating the ideal classroom environment. Good instruction can take place in a variety of settings. However, there is no question that well designed and well maintained classroom facilities have a positive impact on student engagement.

Classrooms should be physically comfortable for students with respect to temperature, space, furniture, and structural organization. Classrooms also need to be mentally stimulating, with attractive displays that include samples of student work and colorful designs. Good teachers pay attention to the physical learning environment and do not make changes to that environment that could become obstacles to student learning.

Rewards and incentives. There is much discussion within education communities and by researchers and practitioners about the role that rewards play in stimulating student work. Probably every teacher at some point has used a “bribe” of food, recreation, or some other reward to encourage students to finish a project or to follow a specific procedure, such as being quiet in a classroom.

There is some concern, and rightly so, that if rewards are used routinely, students are only exhibiting the learning behavior to receive the reward. When the reward disappears, the behavior will stop. Rewards and incentives do have their place, but they must be incorporated carefully.

A key to effective use of rewards is whether it is offered in advance of a behavior. A bad use of the reward system is when a teacher says to students, “If you are quiet for the next 30 minutes, you will get a piece of candy.” In this scenario, the student associates the behavior with the reward. It is a better practice to give the reward spontaneously after the behavior.

Grades are the big incentive system in schools. Students do the work, but often they do the minimal amount possible in order to receive the

grade. Some students even openly avoid doing any work that is not tied to a grade. In this scenario, students see their learning experiences as meaningless activities, but they have to get the good grade to move on toward the next phase of their lives.

Where could students have gotten this gross misunderstanding of the importance of grades? It is the fruition of how we as educators have misguided students as to what is important. We have tried to spur student engagement in otherwise boring and meaningless activities by tying it directly to a grade, by giving a reward in hopes that students would complete their school work.

Also, many students feel labeled as “C” or “D” learners from prior experiences in school and see little reason to improve their efforts. Grades are not a motivation to these students, who are comfortable with completing very little of their work or skipping it altogether. Many schools need to reexamine grading policies both at the schoolwide and classroom level to ensure that this reward system provides a situation in which students are encouraged to work hard.

In general, teachers need to reflect on the appropriate use of rewards in the classroom. The goal should be to build a stronger student perspective on intrinsic motivation as an incentive for student work and student learning, such as the pride of completing a difficult task or the satisfaction that comes from a job well done.

There is no perfect grading system or time to give or withhold rewards. However, schools and teachers need to examine current practices constantly and consider changes that will increase the level of student engagement with respect to using incentives and rewards.

Guiding principles. These are positive character attributes and appropriate behaviors for achieving in school and becoming good citizens as adults. In recent years, however, many schools have moved away from programs that deal with behavioral issues and character education to avoid divisive community debates about whether schools should be teaching anything beyond the old 3 Rs.

The development of a child's character and appropriate behavior is first and foremost the responsibility of the family, but schools can play a strong supporting role. Schools with the highest levels of student achievement

do not sidestep the issue of character education. They embrace it. These schools acknowledge that their success is due in large measure to their attention to guiding principles, through which they have been able to create the supportive learning environment that is essential for students to achieve high standards.

Following are some guiding principles used by many schools.

- adaptability
- compassion
- contemplation
- courage
- honesty
- initiative
- loyalty
- optimism
- perseverance
- respect
- responsibility
- trustworthiness

Habits. These are the routines and procedures that teachers create in the classroom. Habits include the way that students enter a classroom or engage in an activity at the start of every class period. Other habits include the ways that students open and organize materials that they need for the day, move from large to small groups for various activities, and work on individual problems.

Teachers can create improved classroom environments and higher levels of student engagement if they focus on appropriate procedures and have students practice those procedures until they become habits. When students fail to follow the procedures, teachers need to remind them of the rules and ways in which they can practice them. Good habits help to make effective use of instructional time and reduce the disruption that distracts students from the learning process. It is through practices that these procedures become powerful habits and keep students engaged in learning.

Fundamental skills. These are the basic proficiencies that all students need to be able to participate in class and complete their work. Students need basic reading skills, for example, to be able to understand directions and materials used in any subject area. Students also need to acquire the skills to facilitate discussions and to learn how to listen to the teacher as well as other students in group discussions. They also need basic skills in technology for doing Internet research or preparing PowerPoint presentations. In addition, students need to learn basic social skills. To function in the classroom and workforce and as responsible citizens, they have to learn how to greet others, respect space, resolve conflicts, and ask questions. Teachers should ensure that students have these skills through pre-assessment and by constantly monitoring student engagement levels.

Pedagogy

The following key aspects of pedagogy help teachers create an environment in which rigorous and relevant learning can take place.

Designing for rigorous and relevant learning. One of the barriers to high levels of student engagement is the lack of rigorous and relevant instruction. While it is essential that students acquire fundamental skills before they proceed to more complex work, teachers should not keep students hostage by requiring that they complete all the isolated basics before they have the opportunity to engage in challenging and applied learning experiences. Relevance is just as critical as rigor. Relevance can help create conditions and motivation necessary for students to make the personal investment required for rigorous work or optimal learning. Students invest more of themselves, work harder, and learn better when the topic is interesting and connected to something that they already know.

Personalized learning. Each student brings a unique set of characteristics to the classroom: different background knowledge, a unique learning style, a variety of interests, and varied parental support and expectations. To anticipate that each student will learn in the same way, at the same speed, and using the same material is an unrealistic expectation.

Some teachers fall into the false assumption that the student is responsible when he or she fails to demonstrate adequate achievement. But often it is the lack of personalizing learning that is the source of failure.

5 Target for Instructional Leadership

There are many individual practices and strategies that contribute to overall personalization. As a start, teachers can create a more engaging classroom situation by getting to know their students and using examples during instruction that relate to students' backgrounds, cultures, and prior experiences.

Parent involvement also is a part of personalizing learning. By reaching out to parents and establishing cooperation and support for learning expectations, teachers are able to achieve greater personalization. Students also need to experience differentiated instruction instead of constant large group instruction moving at the same rate of speed. There should be opportunities for them to do individual assignments, to work at their own speed — to move more slowly on more difficult material and more quickly on concepts or skills in which they have higher proficiency levels.

Active learning strategies. While it may sometimes be efficient to have students listen to a short lecture, view video material, or read a textbook, doing these types of isolating, sedentary activities on a regular basis becomes mind-numbing rather than mind-engaging. There are strategies that naturally contribute to a much higher level of student engagement. For example, cooperative learning strategies in which students are organized into structured discussion groups and play specific roles in analyzing problems and seeking solutions are more engaging than listening to a lecture. Moreover, varying instructional strategies adds interest and increases engagement. Even the most exciting activities, if done continually, lose their appeal.

Focus on reading. It may seem as a misplacement to talk about literacy as a key ingredient in student engagement. However, many successful schools emphasize the importance of focusing on literacy instruction for continuous learning in all subjects.

Having a literacy focus means that all teachers, regardless of subject area, know the reading levels of the materials that they are using, whether that material is incorporated in textbooks, classroom directions, Internet-based resources, or other reading sources. They also know the reading levels of their students. They are able to match reading materials with individual students and identify where there are significant gaps that might require a change in instructional strategy.

Teachers also need to incorporate vocabulary strategies as part of their individual course instruction. Paying attention to specific terms related to a topic of discussion and using strategies to introduce and reinforce the vocabulary gradually leads to comprehension and better student engagement in every subject. Teachers need to use comprehension strategies such as pre-reading and summarization that provide an opportunity for students to be more engaged in the required reading for a particular instructional activity. Reading is fundamental and cuts across all learning. If teachers expect high levels of student engagement, they need to pay attention to reading levels and establish instructional strategies with literacy as a primary focus in all they do.



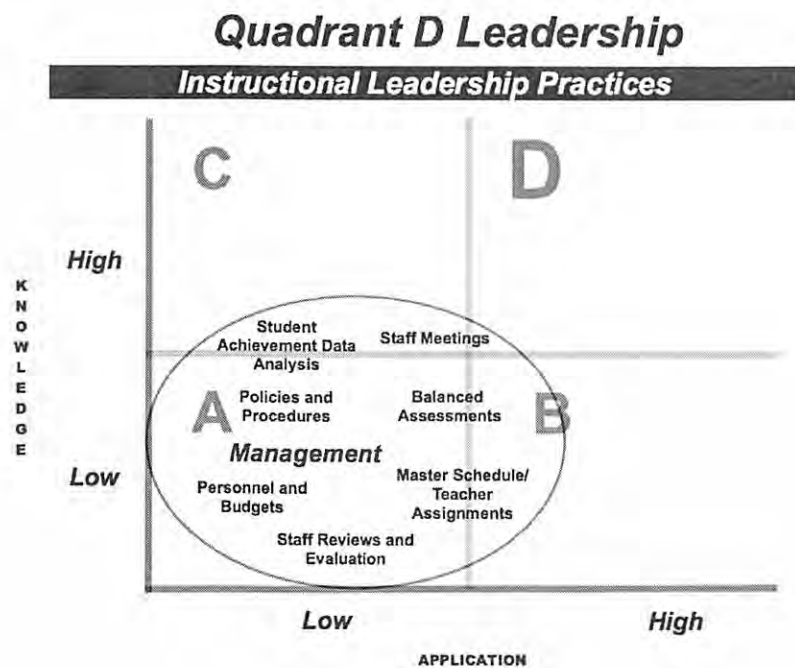
Chapter 6

Management Practices

Running an organization requires a leader to address some basic managerial and administrative tasks. These are called management practices. Make no mistake: management practices are essential, but they demand lower levels of leadership. When a leader operates only at this level or takes an authoritarian approach to management, he or she is considered a Quadrant A leader.

Management practices include:

- Policies and procedures
- Personnel and budgets
- Master schedule/teacher assignments
- Staff meetings
- Staff reviews and evaluations
- Balanced assessments
- Student achievement data analysis



Overview

Schools, as systems, must have common, clear, and practical ways of operating that ensure consistency of instruction in meeting student needs, but which do not stifle innovation or creativity. Teachers need to be aware of school practices and follow established procedures. Leaders need to evaluate their policies on a regular basis.

Leadership Strategies

Policies establish minimum expectations for instruction and they are essential to the efficient operation of a school, but they rarely foster excellence. Effective policies help to reduce staff time spent in supervision and problem solving, and hence more time can be devoted to improvement. However, not everything should be put into a policy. Reducing good instruction to a set of detailed policies can result in too much attention devoted to “doing the right thing” in teaching, and too little attention paid to facilitating learning. Try to create and maintain a minimum set of policies, but do not let policies be the main strategy for improving instruction.

The benefits of creating instructional policies are as follows:

- Policies ensure uniformity and consistency in decisions and actions related to teaching and learning.
- Policies help to create a stable system in which people know their roles and responsibilities.
- Policies that are consistent with legal and ethical requirements help to ensure that staff operate within those legal and ethical boundaries.
- Policies add strength to the position of staff when possible legal actions arise.
- Policies save time when a problem can be handled quickly and effectively because of its relationship to an existing policy.

Policies and Procedures

Schools, as systems, must have common, clear, and practical ways of operating that ensure consistency of instruction in meeting student needs, but which do not stifle innovation or creativity.

- Policies foster stability and continuity. Policies maintain the direction of the school even during changes in the positions of administrators and/or teachers.
- Policies provide the framework for building high quality instruction.
- Policies provide a basis for performance evaluation and accountability.
- Policies clarify functions and responsibilities.

The following discussion relates to instruction about policies that schools frequently establish and maintain, rather than the provision of an exhaustive list of all school policies.

Minimum Teaching Day

Usually there are specific school policies regarding the length of the instructional day, including specific arrival and departure times for teachers. These policies may also identify the minimum and maximum teaching loads for individual teachers. Some policies may address how much time should be devoted to certain subjects or specific instructional practices that should be included each day.

Curriculum Guide/Course of Study

Many schools and districts have established curriculum maps and pacing guides in order to ensure that instruction is aligned with state standards. Policies may be established regarding the use of these maps and guides; teachers may be required to seek approval for variation from these curriculum requirements.

Policies may also be established for the creation of new courses. Secondary schools in particular may establish a submission process for approving new courses. Requirements would include necessary information about seeking approval, a timeline, and the criteria for approval.

Duties of School Leaders

Policies and procedures may include descriptions of duties and the responsibilities of various school leadership positions and teams. As schools create new positions and teams to support instructional change, written descriptions of these positions and teams can be very helpful for everyone.

Classroom Observations

Schools may establish policies on classroom observations, including the frequency, timing, and notification of observations. These policies may also identify who would be involved in observations and they could clarify the purposes of observations.

Lesson Plans

Schools may establish policies for teachers about the requirements for creating, obtaining approval, and storing lesson plans. The school may establish a specific format for lesson plans or elements that may be included in a lesson plan. The school may also have policies regarding the submission of lesson plans for approval, storage, and public access. Schools frequently require the preparation and maintenance of emergency lesson plans in a public file that can be used when necessary.

Substitute Preparation

In order to maintain continuity of instruction, schools often have specific policies or procedures regarding the current classroom instructional content that substitutes would need in the case of teacher absences.

Homework

Schools may establish policies on homework that define what homework is and the expectations for minimum and maximum amounts of required homework in specific grades. Policies may also define criteria for consistently high quality homework and the appropriateness of assigning homework over vacation periods. They may specify student responsibilities in completing homework, how to handle absences, and grading homework. Establishing minimum definitions of homework is

a long-standing tradition in many schools. However, recent research questions the education value of homework in many teaching situations. Schools should be cautious about mandating homework that merely becomes busy work and is not tied to effective instruction.

Grading

Schools may establish policies on grading practices. Teachers may also be required to meet standards for timeliness in grading student work and in maintaining records. These policies may also address parent communication and consequent records of the communication.

If the school maintains a website with grade information, specific policies regarding grade information may be posted. Schools may also have specific policies for at-risk students and for retesting and makeup exams.

Field Trips

Schools frequently have policies regarding the scheduling of field trips, including obtaining parent permission. Activity request forms require approval. Policies usually include guidelines for keeping field trips curriculum-based. Similar policies also relate to approvals necessary for bringing in resource people for instructional purposes.

Discipline Referrals and Student Code of Conduct

In order to make classroom environments free of distractions, schools usually develop schoolwide policies and procedures for student discipline, and a student code of conduct. These policies describe examples of behaviors invoking discipline action and provide a hierarchy of disciplines for repeat or more serious infractions. By having set procedures, communicating discipline action to students is easier. Achieving a consistent enforcement of policies helps build a positive school climate.

Technology

With the extensive use of technology in schools, policies regarding the use of technology are necessary. Policies may exist on the scheduling and use of shared technology equipment or computer rooms, the appropriate use of technology, and the protection of student privacy.

Parent Communication

Parent communication is essential to supporting high expectations in the classroom, increasing student engagement, and supporting students in undertaking challenging work. Schools may have specific policies on communicating with parents about grades or students who are at risk of failure.

An important practice in parent communication is the establishment of frequent communication. Such communication builds a relationship that can then address problems when they arise. Parents should not expect to hear from teachers solely when there is bad news; policies may require frequent communication with parents about any update in the progress of their children. Teachers should also be encouraged to share good news and compliment students on a regular basis when talking with parents.

Tools for Policies and Procedures

Three tools are provided to assist with policies and procedures:

- Instructional Policies Checklist
- Policy Writing Framework
- Atlantic Community High School Lesson Plan Checklist



Instructional Policies Checklist

Yes	No	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Policies reflect the school's vision, mission, and goals.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Policies reflect the school's beliefs regarding rigorous and relevant instruction, positive student relationships, and highly engaged learning.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Policies are broad enough to permit administrators and teachers to interpret and adjust according to changing conditions, but without the need to make basic changes.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Policies are written and published in a manner that is available to all staff and the public.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Policies are written in a clear, simple language that is readily understood by all members of the school community.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Policies are reviewed on at least a biennial basis.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Policies are included in the orientation of all new staff.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Procedures are in place for staff to suggest changes in policy.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Procedures allow for all staff to have input when new policies are created or when current policies are revised.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Policies establish minimum expectations without stifling creativity in instruction.



Policy Writing Framework

The following template can serve as a guideline for schools as they develop their own framework for policy development.

Name of Policy:

Date:

1. Rationale or Purpose

The rationale or purpose explains why the policy is being written. The rationale may also contain or refer to background materials, or more explanatory details regarding education, environmental, legal, regulatory, or other factors that require the development of a policy.

2. Policy Statement

The policy statement should be written in the specific proposed language of the policy. It should be general enough to provide some flexibility in implementation and be clear enough to be understood and address the rationale.

3. Definitions

Policies should be precise and easy to understand. Sometimes terms will need to be defined to clarify meaning.

4. Implementation

The implementation section details how the policy statement will be attained. It may set different requirements for members of the school population (for example, staff, students at various grade levels, parents, and visitors) as well as outline who will be responsible for which phases of the policy's implementation. Phases can include anticipated impacts.

5. Evaluation and Review

Policies must be reviewed on a regular basis. Reviews may be bi-yearly, annually, or as legislation or regulations change. A defined review cycle should be stated.

6. References

Any state or federal laws, regulations, or court decisions that relate to the proposed policy should be included.



**ATLANTIC COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL
LESSON PLAN CHECKLIST**

Teacher's Name _____ Department _____ Date _____

1. Lesson Plans
 - _____ a. Lesson plans are complete and one week in advance.
 - _____ b. Sunshine State Standard(s) are listed in daily plans.
 - _____ c. Evidence of strategies for different learning styles.
 - _____ d. Lesson plans reflect FCAT strategies.
2. Sample Tests
 - _____ a. At least one sample test from the quarter is presented and dated to correspond with lesson plan.
 - _____ b. The test is typed or word-processed.
 - _____ c. Test is designed to reach different learning styles.
 - _____ d. Higher order questions reflecting FCAT strategies are included (written response questions).
3. Phone and Discipline Log Records
 - _____ a. Updated Discipline Log Records.
 - _____ b. Updated phone log.

GRADE BOOK CHECKLIST

4. Grade Book
 - _____ a. Class expectations/syllabus/rules procedures are included.
 - _____ b. Grade book (Grade Quick/Par Score) – assignment sheet present, grades labeled and dated.
 - _____ c. At least one grade a week is recorded.
 - _____ d. Progress report grades.
5. Textbook Record Form
 - _____ a. Form is included with lesson plans and is up-to-date

Administrator

Date

Comments: _____

Personnel and Budgets

The effective use of staff time is the most important aspect of resource management in a school.

Overview

Decisions about whom to hire and where to allocate limited resources will set the foundation for high quality learning. Perhaps the most important decision regarding a school is whom to hire (and sometime fire). School leaders also struggle with limited budgets to provide the resources necessary for good instruction; the largest portion of the budget is allocated to staff salaries and benefits. The effective use of staff time is the most important aspect of resource management in a school.

Leadership Strategies

Hiring Procedures

The successful Quadrant D leaders interviewed in Chapter 3 consistently emphasized the importance of hiring the right people who reflect a passion for teaching and a genuine concern for children.

One of the most critical decisions in school leadership is deciding whom to hire. The successful Quadrant D leaders interviewed in Chapter 3 consistently emphasized the importance of hiring the right people who reflect a passion for teaching and a genuine concern for children. Teachers today need to be prepared to be continuous learners who work effectively with colleagues; hiring procedures should seek to identify potential teaching candidates who have these characteristics.

Before hiring staff, a review of laws and regulations is necessary to be aware of hiring practices that might result in discrimination. In order to avoid problems, these requirements need to be understood thoroughly. A dedicated human resources staff in the district are valuable in helping to understand applicable laws and appropriate interview procedures. For example, certain questions should never be asked. A good practice is to have a set group of interview questions prepared in advance and then ask all candidates the same questions.

Methods of screening and selecting candidates differ widely and no single system is better than another. Hiring procedures will depend upon the size of the school district, the role of other administrators, and the traditions for hiring candidates in the district. Increasingly, school leaders are seeing the value in soliciting many different opinions in interviewing prospective candidates. Valuable opinions can come from teachers with whom the teacher will work, students, and parents. While a hiring decision is not one to delegate to others, leaders should solicit extensive

input from many individuals in the process of collecting data about a potential candidate.

Leaders are recognizing that they need more information than what is obtained from an interview, a resume, or recommendations. Prospective teachers may be observed interacting with students, teaching a lesson, or engaging in professional problem solving with other teachers. These rich and varied experiences provide more authentic information in making the important decision on whom to hire.

In an ideal world, whenever a new position is available within a school, the leadership team should have an opportunity to scan a wide range of possible candidates and select the most qualified person for the position. In reality, in larger schools teachers are often reassigned among schools as a result of budget cuts or seniority. In some situations, a principal or leadership team will have little say over who becomes a new hire within a particular school district. In these situations, it is critical to determine the strengths and weaknesses of a new candidate; the best placement of that individual can help to maximize his or her potential for success and for making a positive contribution to student achievement.

An additional area of consideration in hiring procedures is school assignments. In elementary grades, teachers may choose to switch grade levels due to personal or professional interest. In high schools, teachers who develop more seniority may desire to teach more advanced courses which are frequently smaller and include more highly motivated students. Regardless of the type of school, the leadership team needs to recognize that the decisions about assignments and responsibilities of staff need to be based upon how to maximize student achievement and contribute to overall school success.

Budgets

Schools use a variety of budgeting practices. Frequently, schools in large districts are allocated a budgeted amount per student and decisions on financial decisions are delegated to the school. In these situations, the leadership team has substantial leeway in how to use funds. While there are advantages to this system, there are also greater risks and the leadership team has to take greater responsibility in managing these funds effectively. There is no pool of district resources to dip into if funding mistakes are made.

The leadership team should encourage all staff departments to seek grant funding on a continual basis; these funds can have a substantial impact on instructional improvement efforts.

In smaller districts, money is allocated in budget categories. The district office usually maintains greater responsibility and decision making on the use of those funds. In these instances, the leadership team is frequently negotiating the amounts of money in each budget category.

When seeking to focus on instructional improvement and related professional development, allocating funds within annual school budgets can be challenging. The best available resources are the federal title money that must be used for additional improvement efforts, and not for basic support of school staff and expenses. In these cases, leadership teams need to follow federal guidelines on the appropriate uses of funds. Another important resource is discretionary grant money that often carries more leeway in how funds can be used. The leadership team should encourage all staff departments to seek grant funding on a continual basis; these funds can have a substantial impact on instructional improvement efforts. Even local small businesses may have grants that support individual teacher or school efforts.

Many schools have found that foundations and booster clubs are an effective strategy for supporting school improvement efforts. School foundations are not-for-profit entities that can receive donations from outside sources. A decision will have to be made as to whether these foundations function at a district or a school level — this will vary depending upon the size of the district. School leaders need to remember that any not-for-profit foundation functions independently of the school and school leaders do not have complete discretion over the use of those funds. Relationships between foundation leaders and school leaders are critical to ensuring that these foundations support the appropriate needs of the school. Many schools have used local foundations effectively to support significant school efforts. In some cases, foundations might give small grants to teachers for the unrestricted use of professional development materials or for recognition to teachers.

Another related funding stream is booster clubs that frequently function to support high school sports or music programs. Booster clubs can provide significant volunteer support to assist in these programs. They often raise money through fund-raising activities or concessions. Leadership teams should be careful to establish clear guidelines and expectations on the use of these funds and their correlation to overall school improvement efforts.

Tools for Personnel and Budget

The tool provided below will assist with interviewing potential new staff.



Sample Questions for Personnel Interviews

- ▶ Tell us a little bit about yourself and how you became interested in teaching.
- ▶ Tell us about your professional preparation and experience.
- ▶ What are your strengths?
- ▶ Describe how you would plan instructional activities for a school day, a two-hour block, and a one-hour class.
- ▶ What teaching approaches, techniques, or methods have you found most effective?
- ▶ Explain your experience in differentiating instruction for students.
- ▶ What are some of the ways you have motivated students to learn?
- ▶ What does the statement, "failure is not an option" mean to you?
- ▶ Describe an experience or a time when you had to handle a conflict with a parent. What was the outcome?
- ▶ How would you handle a disruptive student in the classroom? Describe a situation that you handled with a disruptive student and the outcome.
- ▶ Describe some of the procedures you use in establishing an effective classroom environment.
- ▶ List three adjectives you would use to describe the ideal school.
- ▶ Describe how one of your strengths could make this school better.
- ▶ Describe a situation when you had to make a quick decision under pressure. What happened? What was the outcome?
- ▶ Describe some of the computer software applications with which you are familiar.
- ▶ Why did you apply for this job? What are your goals if you were appointed to this position?
- ▶ What are some procedures you have found helpful for organizing and keeping track of the many tasks you have to complete?
- ▶ Describe a situation in which you took responsibility for accomplishing a specific task. What was the result?

School Master Schedule/ Teacher Assignments

Overview

Careful use of time and instructional assignments enables teachers to apply their talents to achieve success at school to a much greater degree. Teacher assignments influence working conditions, traditions, and expectations. Regardless of the assignment, employee contracts could potentially conflict with students' instructional needs. Leaders need to balance any competing agendas in order to maximize effective instruction.

Leadership Strategies

Elementary Teacher Assignments

Scheduling is simpler in elementary schools than in upper level grades, but the assignment of teachers is just as critical a decision. Elementary school leaders need to assess teachers' talents carefully and then place teachers appropriately. Consideration needs to be given to teachers working with a specific student age level as well as with the dynamics of a grade level group that must function as a team.

In the upper level elementary grades, schools are experimenting with teachers teaching subjects to multiple classes. Taken to an extreme, this change creates "departments" where some teachers teach only English language arts or math. In some cases, this structure can be an improvement because the strengths of individual teachers are better utilized when they are more comfortable teaching one subject versus another. It can also increase standardization by making sure that greater numbers of students receive the same instruction. What is sacrificed is the relationship building between teachers and students, and the likelihood that a teacher will not know each of his or her students nearly as well. If teaching is seen as merely presenting a lesson, then it seems logical that there could be an advantage to "departmentalization." If teaching is seen more as facilitating learning, it makes sense for teachers to have greater contact with the same teacher.

To this end, one of the innovations in teacher assignments is looping teachers. In a looping program, teachers spend two years with a group of students, for example, moving with a group of students from grade 3

to 4. This strategy requires more preparation for teachers, but it benefits students by teachers already knowing students and having built sound relationships with them.

There is no research that proves a departmental approach or looping will always be more successful. There are too many variables in each school setting. If school districts try to mandate a practice in each school in the name of consistency, they will see many examples of failure. One approach does not always achieve the same results. Schools need to consider and use *multiple* options that will yield maximum positive results in student achievement.

Houses in Middle School

One effective practice in middle school is the use of a house structure. In middle school, most students transition from having a single teacher to having separate teachers for each subject. When teachers today have only a few minutes of contact with each student and see dozens of students every day, getting to know each one is challenging. In addition, as students make the awkward transition physically into adolescence, it is easy for students to drift in school and receive little adult guidance. In order to address student needs, houses assign groups of students to a set of teachers. Usually these teachers are housed in one wing of the school to reduce student travel. The teachers in a house meet in common planning sessions to assess student progress and focus on student needs. These houses frequently hold group activities and work on building a sense of community, particularly in large middle schools.

In making teachers assignments in middle schools, care should be taken to develop good working relationships with the team of teachers. Leaders also need to balance teams to keep all teams strong. For example, a mix of experienced and new teachers is more important than a team of primarily new teachers. Houses may also need to be structured to allow some students to accelerate to more advanced courses based on individual needs, while still keeping the house structure intact.

High School Schedules

High school schedules need to ensure that every student is accounted for in the most efficient use of limited instructional time. However, schedules should not be rigid structures that do not change during the year. A

master schedule should be a living, breathing document that is always open for adjustment to meet student needs most effectively. Time is one of the most important aspects of school instruction and educators should constantly seek ways to maximize the time available for student learning. Too often, students can waste time by sitting in classes in which they are bored or are so far behind in that it is extra challenging to learn.

Master schedules should be built around the needs of students. Early in the planning process, the number of students in various courses and programs should identify and determine instructional needs. The schedule is then built around those needs and teachers are assigned accordingly.

One of the controversial innovations regarding the use of time in secondary schools is the traditional schedule, where classes meet daily, usually for 45-60 minutes in length, versus a block schedule where classes do not meet every day and classes are usually longer, about 90-120 minutes. In the block schedule, classes might meet every other day; in the 4 x 4 schedule, classes meet every day but only for a half a year. Many schools would argue that their traditional schedule or their block schedule is critically important to increasing student achievement. Which is right? Either schedule can provide an opportunity for success and both schedules will not guarantee success. Just making changes in a schedule will not automatically make improvements in instruction.

In general, schools that are focused on making significant improvement in instruction find greater flexibility by providing highly engaged instructional strategies for a longer period of instruction.

In general, schools that are focused on making significant improvement in instruction find greater flexibility by providing highly engaged instructional strategies for a longer period of instruction. Such a block also enables teachers to see fewer students during the day, which increases the potential for developing better relationships with a smaller group of students. Making these changes is easier to accomplish within the block, but simply going to a block schedule and hoping that teachers modify instruction or develop better relationships will not necessarily occur. Many schools that have gone to a block schedule have failed to see significant improvements, and as a result, they have gone back to a traditional schedule.

Some critics of block scheduling voice the argument that student attention span is too short for long class periods. In actuality, student attention span is less than 20 minutes. In some traditional 45-minute classes, unproductive work occurs at the start of the class, little is accomplished at the end of class, and perhaps 20 minutes of engaged learning occurs in

the middle. Regardless of the length of the class period, teachers should be varying instructional strategies and student work every 15-20 minutes. For individual subjects, how the time is spent is more important than the length of time available.

Successful Implementation of Block Scheduling

In any significant school restructuring, many factors are necessary for success. Among them are a common vision, a well-thought-out plan, strong support from stakeholders, and opportunities to learn about and understand the proposed initiative.

Changing a school schedule requires all of these factors. When thinking about changing to a block schedule, implementation suggestions that will enhance preparation and planning include:

- Have an instructional goal that you expect to accomplish by moving to a block schedule.
- Set measurable goals on how to evaluate the effectiveness of the block schedule.
- Be familiar with block schedule options.
- Consult with/visit schools, students, and educators who follow a block schedule.
- Involve students, teachers, administrators, and parents in the change process; feedback and support from all are essential.
- Provide professional development on the effective use of class time.
- Give staff the time and opportunity to identify resources needed to adapt to the change.
- Pay attention to course sequences and teacher contract requirements.
- Seek constant evaluation of a change in scheduling.

Schools also need to be willing to make changes within the schedule to meet individual student needs. For example, some students may need to meet for a shorter time period each day even though they are in a block schedule. Or, other courses may need to be scheduled in back-to-back arrangements in order to provide for interdisciplinary instruction.

In any significant school restructuring, many factors are necessary for success. Among them are a common vision, a well-thought-out plan, strong support from stakeholders, and opportunities to learn about and understand the proposed initiative.

Ways to Differentiate Time and Schedule Options

The following schedule options offer additional instructional opportunities for students:

- *Lunch period tutorial and extensions:* Use portions of lunch periods for additional instructional time for students.
- *Zero hour:* Use a before-school time period for tutorials or extra instruction for students taking advanced courses.
- *Before- and after-school:* Provide this additional instruction as part of the teacher's day or offer it through the use of supplemental funds and service.
- *Offset days:* Provide alternative schedules on some days. This option could create time for school events, advisory periods, or mini-courses.
- *Saturday opportunities:* Provide additional instructional time for students.
- *Online learning:* Reduce conflicts and limitations in the school schedule and transportation problems with online courses and tutorials where students can participate from alternative locations and at more convenient times.

Why make changes to a schedule?	Poor reasons to change the schedule:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ to meet individual student needs ✓ to meet the needs of a group, such as the 9th grade ✓ to meet the needs of great teaching practices ✓ to reduce student discipline problems by offering less unstructured time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ convenience for athletics ✓ hard to schedule single-course offerings ✓ complexity for parents ✓ preparation for the Advanced Placement tests ✓ teachers are used to a different schedule ✓ bus schedule conflicts ✓ software limitations ✓ everybody else does it this way

Tools for School Master Schedule/Teacher Assignments

Definitions of block scheduling options are provided in the tool below.



Block Scheduling Defined

4 x 4 Block

Under this plan, students attend four classes per day for a semester. Classes run for 85-120 minutes. At the end of the first semester, students have completed four full courses. (In the traditional schedule plan, one full year would be necessary to complete them.) In the second semester, students take four different courses. Some exceptions exist, such as for AP and music classes; full-year courses are maintained for these classes.

Advantages of the block 4 x 4 or block include:

- ✓ Students only have to focus on four courses per semester.
- ✓ Course preparation is less for both teachers and students.
- ✓ Teachers have fewer students each semester.
- ✓ Fewer textbooks and instructional resources are needed.

A/B Block

Using this method, students take eight classes for the entire school year divided into an A group and a B group. Each group consists of four classes that meet for approximately 90 minutes every other day. Thus, in this alternate day schedule, students and teachers meet every other day for extended time periods. The A/B block offers increased instructional time on a daily basis. Students have fewer classes, assignments, and tests for which to prepare. The day off in between classes allows for "distancing time" in classes where students are experiencing disciplinary or other problems.

Modified Block

This method combines some of the 4 x 4 block approach and the traditional eight-period schedule day. The schedule may provide a 4 x 4 block on four days during the week and a regular eight-period day on the other day. In another version, students have two blocked classes each day along with three traditional shorter period classes.

Flexible Schedule

In this plan, students follow a combination of the 4 x 4 and the A/B block schedules. Class time varies from day to day. For example, students attend 90-minute classes three days per week and on the other two days students take these classes for 75 minutes and have an additional advisement or resource period for 60 minutes. The advantages of flexible scheduling are greater available time for students to complete work, engage in short-term enrichment programs, and obtain additional assistance during the resource period.

Trimester Plan

With the trimester schedule, students take two or three courses for 60 days and earn six or nine credits per year. Variations within this plan include two long classes and one short class per day, or two long classes and two short classes per day. The advantages of the trimester plan are as follows:

- ✓ Students focus on only a few courses per trimester.
- ✓ Students and teachers prepare for fewer courses per trimester.
- ✓ Teachers have a smaller student load per trimester.
- ✓ Fewer textbooks and instructional resources are required.

Overview

Designated staff meetings are more productive when they focus on instructional rather than administrative issues. Frequently, these meetings occur at the end of the school day when everyone is exhausted. Since leaders usually have limited time as defined by employment contracts, leaders need to make group meetings as productive as possible, keep them engaging, and use the opportunity to influence instruction.

Leadership Strategies

Most districts and schools have established procedures for school staff meetings. These procedures are often part of an employee association contract designating the frequency and length of staff meetings. Staff meetings are not just about administrative information sharing; rather, they can be an integral practice in instructional leadership. In order to maximize the focus on instructional leadership in staff meetings, principals should reduce the time spent on administrative tasks and devote the limited time to instructional issues. Many administrative tasks and announcements can be completed through a written memo and/or e-mail to staff. Bringing all staff together to read announcements is an inefficient use of professional time.

Time for Staff Meetings

In finding times for staff meetings, an effective practice is to consider a rotating late student arrival scenario where students come to school late on one particular morning. Using these times for staff meetings and addressing issues on instructional leadership are more productive since staff are fresh, rather than at the end of the day when fatigue has set in. Staff will be more creative and highly engaged in these types of staff meetings. Another issue with after-school meetings is the frequent conflict with coaches who must be with students for team practices, which often take place after school.

Use of Team Meetings

While it is important to come together as an entire school community, team meetings can be an effective way to address instructional topics or

Staff Meetings

Since leaders usually have limited time as defined by employment contracts, leaders need to make group meetings as productive as possible, keep them engaging, and use the opportunity to influence instruction.

problem solving. By working with the leaders of these teams, a standard agenda can be established on a topic for discussion. These instructional conversations can continue simultaneously across several team meetings, rather than in one large full staff meeting. Often the smaller structure is more effective in engaging staff and addressing problems, rather than having every person in one room.

There is very little evidence that people change by listening to others. They change when they have an opportunity to talk and reflect.

One of the ways to break down a top-down authoritarian structure is to have more decentralized staff meetings and discussions about instructional issues. One serious risk is that not everyone may be hearing the same information. Decentralized team meetings are more consistent with Quadrant D Leadership. Besides, everyone hearing the same message is not the best way to accomplish significant change and improvement. There is very little evidence that people change by listening to others. They change when they have an opportunity to talk and reflect. Thus, change is more likely to happen in smaller group meetings rather than in larger staff meetings.

Morning Meetings

A common practice used in business is the morning meeting. Using a morning meeting is difficult to accomplish in a school setting because of tradition and the early start to the school day. However, a morning meeting can be a highly effective strategy to build a strong professional community and raise the level of leadership within an organization. Some types of schools regularly conduct an entire staff and student morning meeting. Examples include elementary schools, which are smaller and have convenient facilities in which the entire school community can meet, and small high schools, where all staff and students assemble in a meeting room to cover announcements and verify attendance. These types of morning meetings provide great opportunities for student leadership.

Morning meetings may also occur for staff only. A.B. Combs in Raleigh, N.C., is an example of a school that uses a morning meeting for all staff. They are expected to meet in the library for 15 minutes four days a week. The meeting always starts and ends on time, and provides an effective strategy for recognizing staff, building a strong sense of community, and providing an invigorating start to the day's work.

Tools for Staff Meetings

Below is a tool for conducting effective meetings.



Tips for Great Meetings

Before the Meeting

Before the meeting, plan ahead to accomplish meaningful results and use time efficiently. Decide what you hope to accomplish by holding the meeting. Do not just fill meeting time with activities; rather, offer specific outcomes to accomplish.

- ▶ **Plan the meeting.** Before planning goes too far, identify whether other staff should help plan the meeting. Are there opinions from specific people that will help to improve the meeting or results? Then, establish specific goals for the meeting. These goals will establish the framework for an effective meeting plan. Just as a teacher plans a good lesson by using, "Begin with the end in mind." Your meeting purpose will determine the meeting focus, the meeting agenda, and the participants.
- ▶ **Make sure you need a meeting.** Once you have developed your meeting plan, ensure that a meeting is the appropriate vehicle for accomplishing the set goals. To schedule and hold a meeting is expensive when you take into account the time of all the attendees. Therefore, determine whether a meeting is the best opportunity to solve the problem, improve the process, or develop the ongoing plan. You may find that you can accomplish the meeting goals with an e-mail discussion or by requesting information through a hard-copy memo. Make sure the meeting is needed and not just convenient for you – you will then get better results from the attendees.
- ▶ **Distribute and review materials prior to the meeting.** Too many meetings start with the meeting facilitator passing out a ream of handouts to read and then discuss. The meeting that becomes a group read-in is hardly productive. Make meetings more productive and ensure results by providing necessary pre-work a few days in advance of the actual meeting. The more preparation time you allot, the better-prepared people will be for your meeting. Pre-work (reports, charts, graphs, etc.) distributed in a timely manner, with the serious expectation that attendees will read the pre-work before the meeting, helps ensure meeting success.

During the Meeting

The following steps can breathe new life into your staff meeting. Try to create a smooth-running meeting that fully engages your staff, increases the effectiveness of decision making, heads off emergencies, and reduces the number of problems that require your attention.

- ▶ **Link the agenda with your mission.** Your school vision and goal statements project your key objectives and strategies, which should feed directly into your meeting agenda. For example, if one of the overarching strategies is to increase student engagement, then list student engagement as an item on your agenda. Underneath that banner you could list instructional practices, student discipline, or relationship building. The same style of agenda should flow from week to week.
- ▶ **Build relationships.** Use icebreakers and team-building activities regularly to help staff get to know one another and develop relationships. It may seem like taking time from more important agenda items, but building staff relationships will pay off in the long run with a more productive team, great trust, and enhanced communication.
- ▶ **Establish ground rules.** Agree to a set of ground rules that covers all meetings. Ground rules help keep everyone on task and serve as a reminder when anyone is acting inappropriately or wasting the group's time.
- ▶ **Create synergy.** Most people overlook the primary purpose of bringing staff together — to inspire the group to achieve results faster, higher, and better. When the feeling in the group is warm and supportive, it is easier to see that everyone is a member and that the success of the team is linked directly to the success of each individual.
- ▶ **Establish rapport.** Effective two-way communication, shared in an environment of trust, is the cornerstone of a great staff meeting. No strategy or management edict — even yours — should go unchallenged, provided that the goal is to improve some facet of education. Brainstorm new ideas to find ways around potential roadblocks. The staff should learn from you and you should learn from them.
- ▶ **Think outside the box.** Another overlooked objective of effective staff meetings is professional development. Properly conducted staff meetings are a forum for continuous improvement. Always look for ways to improve performance by carving out time on the agenda to discuss books, articles, and even videos that may spark new ideas or improve instruction.



- ▶ **Hold meetings regularly.** The more frequently meetings are held, the better. In certain situations, daily meetings are appropriate. In others, weekly meetings will do. Let too many days slip by and you risk sending the wrong message to your team. People will never take meetings seriously if you do not take them seriously.
- ▶ **Get in and get out.** To achieve the objectives, an effective meeting should last about an hour. No more or the sense of dread may start to sink in. No less because you won't be able to devote the time to accomplish your objectives. Timeliness is critical to running an effective meeting. Start it on time and end when you say you will. That action also honors the schedules of other staff.
- ▶ **Write up the minutes.** The minutes provide the foundation for the next meeting's agenda. At the beginning of the meeting, make sure someone is assigned to write up what happened and what you are planning to make happen; in other words, who is going to do what by when.

After the Meeting

A meeting is not over just because the appointed time to adjourn arrives and staff leave the meeting. Actions such as the following are important to continued productivity after the meeting.

- ▶ **Distribute minutes.** Once the meeting has concluded, arrange for the recorder's notes to be posted or distributed to all participants. Post-meeting communication provides form and closure both to the participants' contributions and to their social needs. Keep the notes to the important action to take rather than the minute-by-minute. Also include unresolved issues that must be addressed at a future meeting.
- ▶ **Follow through.** Make sure you follow through on commitments made in the meeting. A great way to build trust over time is to follow through quickly and thoroughly on all promises.

Staff Reviews and Evaluations

Overview

Staff improvement results from periodic high quality staff review, feedback, and evaluation. Every school has procedures and routines for hiring, annual reviews of new teachers, and reviews that are required for granting tenure. Some schools and states also require annual reviews of all staff. These reviews should not be casual, perfunctory, administrative paperwork; they are ideal times to give feedback to teachers that are based on clear criteria.

Leadership Strategies

Teacher evaluations often become a superficial obligation rather than a meaningful conversation that identifies teacher needs and develops plans for improvement. The entire education community seems reluctant to identify teachers honestly that need improvement and instead seems to gloss over teacher quality by portraying every teacher as “above average.” A 2009 article, “The Rubber Room,” in *The New Yorker*, noted that only 1.8% of tenured teachers in New York City public schools are rated unsatisfactory, and thus reveals more about the quality of evaluations than about teacher performance. In a system of 89,000 teachers, inadequate assessment means poor performance goes unaddressed, new teachers fail to receive targeted support, excellence goes unrecognized, and professional development is not aligned with teacher needs. The problem is placing a label on performance, such as “unsatisfactory,” draws attention to that label rather than focusing a conversation on how each teacher can improve.

According to 2008 data from *Education Week’s* Education Counts database, eight states do not require teacher performance to be evaluated at all, only 12 states require teacher evaluations on an annual basis, 26 states require evaluators to receive formal training, and 12 states link teacher evaluation to student performance.

The 2001 *No Child Left Behind* legislation emphasized the importance of teacher quality. However, the measure of teacher quality remained superficial objective criteria, such as college major and certification requirements. These preparation credentials often bear little connection to the quality of teaching in the classroom. The current administration,

“The Rubber Room,”
The New Yorker,
August 31, 2009

Inadequate assessment means poor performance goes unaddressed, new teachers fail to receive targeted support, excellence goes unrecognized, and professional development is not aligned with teacher needs.

This resource kit includes a DVD related to this topic: *Monitoring Instruction Through Formal and Informal Evaluation of Staff*.

in discussions about funding for school improvement and federal reauthorization, have drawn additional attention to the teacher quality issue, and have encouraged states to link teacher quality to student achievement.

While it may be difficult to equate any single student's improvement solely to the performance of a teacher, teacher performance is one of the most significant factors in student success. Likewise, many students interact with six or more teachers on a continual basis and it is challenging to divide students among those teachers proportionally. At a minimum, government policy changes prompt schools to take a more serious look at teacher quality and honestly appraise teacher performance. No government policy can adequately address the nuances of measuring the performance of a teacher in a classroom; however, the signals are very clear that schools need to give greater attention to evaluating teacher performance honestly.

Some of the key elements in an excellent evaluation system include an extended development phase with input from all constituents, the development of reliable instruments, the use of multiple measures, extensive professional development for evaluators and teachers, meaningful incentives, and professional development that is tied to identified needs.

Teacher evaluations also need to address the important role of teachers in the entire school system in solving problems and school leadership. The idea that a teacher evaluation can be based upon only one brief observation within the classroom severely diminishes the true professional role that teachers play in schools.

One of the widely accepted frameworks for looking at the role of teachers is by Charlotte Danielson. This framework includes four separate domains that define the complete teacher role: Planning and Preparation, the Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities.

Some of the key elements in an excellent evaluation system include an extended development phase with input from all constituents, the development of reliable instruments, the use of multiple measures, extensive professional development for evaluators and teachers, meaningful incentives, and professional development that is tied to identified needs.

The Framework for Teaching

Domain 1: Planning and Preparation

- ▶ Demonstrating Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy
- ▶ Demonstrating Knowledge of Students
- ▶ Setting Instructional Outcomes
- ▶ Demonstrating Knowledge of Resources
- ▶ Designing Coherent Instruction
- ▶ Designing Student Assessments

Domain 2: The Classroom Environment

- ▶ Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport
- ▶ Establishing a Culture for Learning
- ▶ Managing Classroom Procedures
- ▶ Managing Student Behavior
- ▶ Organizing Physical Space

Domain 3: Instruction

- ▶ Communicating With Students
- ▶ Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques
- ▶ Engaging Students in Learning
- ▶ Using Assessment in Instruction
- ▶ Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness

Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities

- ▶ Reflecting on Teaching
- ▶ Maintaining Accurate Records
- ▶ Communicating With Families
- ▶ Participating in a Professional Community
- ▶ Growing and Developing Professionally
- ▶ Showing Professionalism

Source: Danielson, Charlotte. www.danielsongroup.org

Evaluations Versus Observations

All staff need to be formally evaluated annually. This statement does not mean only observed once annually. The evaluation should be based upon classroom observations, student achievement, student engagement, and participation of staff in school leadership and school improvement functions.

The teacher evaluation system needs to focus on identifying needs and improving all teachers, not simply on labeling and removing poor teachers. Then, the evaluation must connect directly to providing supports and professional development for teachers to improve.

Pre- and Post-evaluation Conferences

Once an evaluation system is established with clear criteria, each teacher should have a meeting with a supervisor in advance of an evaluation to ensure that all parties understand the criteria and to provide the teacher with an opportunity to offer evidence related to each of the criteria. Once a principal or supervisor has prepared the evaluation, a post-evaluation conference should be held to discuss the ratings in the evaluation and plan additional follow-up professional development and support that will improve areas of need.

A Systems Approach to Improvement

The focus of an evaluation system should not be on pointing out deficiencies, but rather on recording and promoting positive practices. While one clear purpose of the evaluation is to identify areas of need and to recommend professional development to address those needs, a far more important purpose of evaluations is to promote the spread of positive practices. Teachers that exhibit positive practices can be identified and practices can be shared with other staff as models for other teachers to aspire to.

Evaluation is not only about evaluating teachers; all staff should be evaluated annually, including assistant principals and team leaders.

The focus of an evaluation system should not be on pointing out deficiencies, but rather on recording and promoting positive practices.

Balanced Assessments

Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning — holding students accountable to learning and providing information about how well students are progressing toward standards.

Stiggins, R,
*Assessment
Crisis: The
Absence of
Assessment
FOR Learning*

Overview

Effective use of assessment in instruction is about balance — balance in type, purpose, timing, and importance of multiple forms of assessment. Effective assessment includes multiple measures of student learning. In a leadership role, it is essential to maintain a balance in the various forms of assessment used in day-to-day instruction. Another significant leadership role is to help develop staff skills in designing assessments and using feedback and data from assessments to modify instruction. Finally, it is critical for leaders to give direction to staff in ensuring that each type of assessment finds its proper place in an overall instructional system.

Leadership Strategies

Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning — holding students accountable to learning and providing information about how well students are progressing toward standards. Standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment are interwoven in the learning process, and each informs the others as summarized:

- Standards are the *what*. They define what we expect students to know and be able to do.
- Curriculum is the *how*. It defines a body of learning experiences that are designed to reach the standards.
- Instruction is the *ways*. It provides the specific learning experiences and the ways of differentiating those experiences in order to scaffold student learning.
- Assessment is the *how well*. It gauges the attainment of learning to inform instructional practices and curriculum.

A balanced approach to assessment includes a continuum of practices within a range of frequency and purpose.

One of the ways to categorize the types of assessment is in its relationship to learning. Stiggins makes the simple and useful distinction between whether assessment is *OF* learning or *FOR* learning. Assessment *OF* learning is a culminating event separate from instruction. An example for *OF* Learning is the AP test. It occurs near the end of the school year and is used to measure which students meet the high expectations required in AP courses.

Assessment FOR learning occurs in the middle of the instructional process; teachers can use the results of the assessment to re-teach, review, and otherwise modify instruction in an effort to improve student learning.

As a third distinction, assessment can also be AS learning. In these instances, the assessment includes student performance that a student has not rehearsed and therefore, the assessment becomes learning experiences in themselves. Assessment AS learning makes sense as teachers introduce students to high rigor and high relevance learning.

Assessment OF learning and assessment FOR learning can be labeled in the more traditional categories of summative and formative assessment. Summative assessment culminates instruction, measuring what students have learned cumulatively. Formative assessment occurs during instruction, giving feedback to students and teachers while there is still time to modify instruction and the level of learning. A great metaphor to describe summative and formative assessment is a chef preparing a soup. When the customer tastes the soup, it is summative; the customer judges the effectiveness of the chef's work. When the chef tastes the soup, before serving it the customer, the assessment is formative. There is still time to modify the soup to meet the desired standard.

Types of Assessments

Assessments also vary in type by who prepares the assessment — the teacher, the leadership team, the district, the state, or a national group. For convenience, six main categories of assessment are identified: standardized, benchmark, common, classroom summative, classroom formative, and standardized continuous.

Standardized assessments occur either annually or every few years. Assessment instruments and procedures are standardized so that comparisons can be made across large student groups. Examples of standardized assessments include the various state accountability assessments and those developed by large-scale testing programs, including the ACT, SAT, NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress), and AP and IB (International Baccalaureate) exams. The focus of standardized assessments is to determine how schools, districts, and states are progressing. They are labeled “high stakes” when meeting a

specific performance level results in an award, such as a test required for earning a diploma or awarding college credit.

Benchmark assessments occur within, between, and among instructional units. Benchmark assessment is formative, but they may be developed by district staff or they may be purchased commercially from outside developers. Information is used to identify strengths and gaps in curriculum and instruction. Grade level curriculum may be refined and teachers may modify instruction for student groups based on their progress. When using a commercial product, an examination should be made of the types of questions used and the alignment to state standards. The focus of benchmark assessment is either on how to determine that student groups are progressing or on how well a program is working.

Common assessments are summative assessments that occur at the end of a unit of instruction or more often at the end of a course. Common assessments are either commercially developed or developed by district or school teams. Single teachers typically do not develop them, although they may have input. The primary purpose of common assessments is to achieve consistency of instruction across both classrooms and schools within a district.

Classroom summative assessments are similar to common assessments, but they are usually teacher-developed. Occurring at the end of a unit or course, classroom summative assessments are often more performance based with scoring guides and rubrics. Teachers may use common rubrics across a school and share best practices. However, the evaluation of classroom summative assessments is frequently subjective by the teacher. Classroom summative assessments need to be aligned with standards; they are the key focus in developing an instructional unit as teachers plan on how to take students from their prior learning to the expected learning.

Classroom formative assessments occur continuously in the classroom, both within and between lessons. Information is used to adjust teaching strategies, and students receive frequent and meaningful feedback on their performance. Examples of formative assessment strategies include teacher observation, discussion, questioning, and non-graded classwork. The focus of formative assessments is to determine what learning comes next for a student.

Students and teachers can use formative assessments frequently to monitor progress toward learning goals. Schools usually set up such assessments in six- or nine-week intervals. With the accountability requirements for annual testing in elementary grades and the testing in high schools, it is essential to monitor the progress students are making toward expected standards. Feedback through frequent common assessments gives all teachers a standard by which they can compare their students and it provides data to modify instruction in order to increase student achievement.

Standardized continuous assessments are recurring or connected assessments that measure student learning on a continuous scale. For example, the *Scholastic Reading Inventory* is a reading comprehension assessment that uses the Lexile scale to measure reading levels over time. This data is helpful to students in showing their progress; teachers can use the data in planning instruction and personalizing learning.

Balancing Assessments

The following aspects of instruction are important measures of balance:

- **Types of assessment.** A good assessment program uses all the types of assessments described in this chapter and keeps a relative balance of importance among these various types.
- **Level of rigor and relevance.** Another measure of balance is the level of rigor and relevance in the particular assessment. If all assessments are in Quadrant A learning — low rigor and low relevance — students are unlikely to achieve high levels of learning. Teachers can use multiple assessments at different levels of rigor and relevance in order to inspire high levels of student learning.
- **Time.** Another aspect of balance is the time devoted to assessment. With the increase in state testing, district benchmark testing, and test rehearsal, it often seems that teachers are devoting inordinate amounts of time to testing. Research has documented the significant erosion of instructional time with the increase of time devoted to testing. It is important to maintain a balance of time so that assessment does not overwhelm instruction.

Research has documented the significant erosion of instructional time with the increase of time devoted to testing. It is important to maintain a balance of time so that assessment does not overwhelm instruction.

- **Stress level.** One of the consequences of high-stakes testing is increased stress levels for educators and students. When high-stakes tests determine graduation, school rating, or even teacher and administrator jobs, the consequences of poor testing results are significant. This raises the stress level for everyone involved. While some stress is useful in helping staff and students to focus on the importance of testing, too much stress becomes counterproductive. An important goal in balancing assessments within the school is to maintain manageable stress levels. Teachers and students need to know that assessments are important, but creating an environment where everyone is over-stressed or where some assessments matter more than others, are counterproductive to effective student learning. Students should simply make every test an important event and give it their best effort.

Recognition of Being Out of Balance

One of the ways that leaders can learn if their assessment program is out of balance is when conversations among teachers are about only one type of test. If the only conversations are about state assessments and there is little conversation about classroom formative assessments or end-of-course common assessments, it is a good indication that the testing program is out of balance. Schools need to give attention to state assessments, but it should not be the only subject of conversation regarding assessments.

Another way to examine an out-of-balance assessment system is by the amount of classroom formative and summative assessment development, particularly formative assessment at high levels of rigor and relevance. Teachers should be constantly developing and sharing ideas about formative assessments, especially rubrics and scoring guides, which can be used for authentic performance assessments at high levels of rigor and relevance. When there is little conversation or activity around developing such assessments, the assessment system is likely out of balance.

Yet another indication is when the only common assessments in use across classrooms are benchmarking assessments, which are closely aligned to state assessments. Every state test developer will convey that a state testing program only measures minimum competencies and examines thin slices of curriculum standards. Benchmarking assessments

Instructional Leadership — Quadrant D Leadership Practices

monitor student progress in meeting those state assessments, and good benchmark assessments are closely aligned with state assessments. Consequently, benchmark assessments only measure a thin slice of student achievement. If these assessments are the only form of common assessments, teachers are automatically lowering expectations for students.

Finally, when students care about certain tests and “blow off” other forms of assessment, the assessment system is out of balance. Students need to understand the value of each assessment, and each one should be looked upon equally as an event in which students should put forth their best effort.

Various Leader Roles

Leaders have specific roles in each type of assessment. These tables highlight important responsibilities for administrators, leadership teams, and teachers within each type.

Standardized Assessments		
Responsibilities		
Administrators	Leadership Teams	Teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Ensure the security of tests and adherence to testing procedures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Analyze tests to determine standards covered, format, and the expected level of rigor and relevance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Become familiar with the format and content of the assessments.▶ Align instruction with standards that are covered in assessments.▶ Prepare students in test-taking procedures.

Benchmark Assessments		
Responsibilities		
Administrators	Leadership Teams	Teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Select benchmark assessments to be used. ▶ Ensure benchmark assessments align with standardized assessments. ▶ Provide timely and accurate data and reports for teachers on benchmark assessments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Determine the timing and frequency of benchmark assessments. ▶ Analyze data from benchmark assessments to inform instruction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Become familiar with the format and content of assessments. ▶ Modify instruction that is based on feedback from assessments. ▶ Prepare students in test-taking procedures.

Common Assessments		
Responsibilities		
Administrators	Leadership Teams	Teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Ensure the security of common tests and adherence to testing procedures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Select and/or develop common assessments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Become familiar with the format and content of assessments. ▶ Align instruction with standards that are covered in assessments. ▶ Prepare students in test-taking procedures.

Classroom Summative Assessments		
Responsibilities		
Administrators	Leadership Teams	Teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Arrange for professional learning on assessment as needed by staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Consider the use and timing of common assessments as summative assessments. ▶ Share best practices that are related to the development and use of formative assessments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Develop assessments for use at the culmination of instruction. ▶ Continue to develop skills that are related to assessment development. ▶ Align assessments with the expected level of rigor and relevance. ▶ Plan instruction using backwards design to lead students to achieve assessment performance.

Classroom Formative Assessments		
Responsibilities		
Administrators	Leadership Teams	Teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Arrange for professional learning on assessment as needed by staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Consider the use and timing of benchmark assessments to inform instruction. ▶ Share best practices that are related to the development and use of formative assessments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Develop assessments for use at the appropriate times in instruction. ▶ Continue to develop skills that are related to assessment development. ▶ Align assessments with the expected level of rigor and relevance.

Further information on assessment can be found in the International Center resource kit, *Using Assessment for Instruction*.

Tools for Balanced Assessments

The section provided two tools:

- Comparison of Types of Assessments
- Informal Formative Assessment



Comparison of Types of Assessments				
Classroom Formative	Classroom Summative	Common	Benchmark	Standardized
Purpose				
Informs instruction. ▶ Are students prepared for more rigorous and relevant work? ▶ How effective is my instruction? ▶ What aspects of curriculum do I need to re-teach?	Measures cumulative learning for a unit or course. ▶ How will students demonstrate that they have learned skills and knowledge?	Measures groups of students against common standards. ▶ How well are my students doing compared to others?	Diagnoses student learning needs and/or monitors progress. ▶ How are students progressing in learning foundation skills? ▶ Are students prepared for standardized exams?	Measures state, district, school, or students against state or national standards. ▶ Have students met the standards? ▶ How do they compare?
Connection With Learning				
Assessment FOR and AS Learning	Assessment OF Learning	Assessment OF Learning	Assessment FOR and OF Learning	Assessment OF Learning
Developer				
Teachers	Teachers, Teacher Teams	Teacher Teams, Schools, Districts	Districts, Commercial Test Developers	States, Commercial Test Developers



Comparison of Types of Assessments				
Classroom Formative	Classroom Summative	Common	Benchmark	Standardized
Audience for Results				
Students, Teachers	Students, Teachers	Students, Teachers, Schools, Districts	Students, Teachers, Schools, Districts	Students, School and District Leaders, Public
Use of Results				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Within instructional activity, information is used to change or adjust teaching. ▶ Students receive frequent and meaningful feedback on performance. ▶ Teachers decide if students need remediation or enrichment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Students receive feedback on learning compared to lesson expectations. ▶ Teachers get feedback on student achievement of lesson objectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Teachers are able to compare achievement of their students to other groups of students. ▶ Schools, districts, and teacher teams are able to compare instruction and achievement across multiple schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Grade level or content-based teacher teams use data to identify strengths and gaps in curriculum and instruction. ▶ Grade level course curriculum may be changed or refined. ▶ Teachers modify instruction for student groups based on their progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ School or district teams measure progress toward goals. ▶ States monitor school and district progress. ▶ Students include achievement in credentials for the next level of learning.
Timing				
Within a lesson	End of the unit or course	End of units, six or nine week intervals, or the end of the semester/year	Usually annually or at designated intervals	Annually or at the end of the school year

Comparison of Types of Assessments				
Classroom Formative	Classroom Summative	Common	Benchmark	Standardized
Examples				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Feedback ▶ Teacher questions ▶ Exit tickets ▶ Observations ▶ Ungraded student work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Performance assessments ▶ Extended writing ▶ Projects ▶ Presentations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Locally developed end-of-course tests ▶ Unit tests ▶ Schoolwide common performance rubrics, (e.g., Six Traits Writing Rubric) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ District assessments ▶ Commercial products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ End-of-course exams ▶ State assessments ▶ ACT/SAT ▶ AP exams ▶ Industry certification tests

Source: *Using Assessment for Instruction*, published by the International Center for Leadership in Education



Informal Formative Assessment		
Examples of Informal Assessment of Students	Data and Its Capture by Teacher	Possible Use of Feedback
Oral individual assessment asks students to affirm their understanding of a concept. Such questions are always asked before identifying a student for a response.	Teacher mental list or check-off in notebook	Teacher can form small student groups based on level of understanding and assign specific clarification tasks.
Oral together assessment questions seek choral responses. Teachers pay careful attention to the number of students who respond.	Teacher mental list	Change or not change instruction of concept.
The visual responses (e.g., thumbs-up or -down, open hand versus closed hand) method asks students to provide a signal that corresponds to their level of understanding. Initially, students may be asked to do this with their eyes closed to minimize self-consciousness.	Teacher mental list or check-off in notebook	Teacher can form small student groups based on level of understanding and assign specific clarification tasks.
The red/green cards approach asks students to turn green cards if they understand and red if they do not.	Teacher mental list or check-off in notebook	Teacher can form small student groups based on level of understanding and assign specific clarification tasks.
Written (e.g., quizzes, exit cards) assessment elicits short written responses that can be quickly reviewed by the teacher to assess levels of understanding. For example, students are asked to complete exit cards that elicit responses to such questions as: "What I did I understand?" "What do I need to learn more about?" "What don't I understand?"	Teacher check-off in notebook	Teacher can reorient future lessons based on level of understanding. If questions asked are higher Bloom's Taxonomy may get more useful information.

Informal Formative Assessment		
Examples of Informal Assessment of Students	Data and Its Capture by Teacher	Possible Use of Feedback
Performance tasks require the demonstration or performance (e.g., reading, experiment, dance move, creation of a geometrical condition) of a discrete task directly focused on the concept just completed.	Teacher uses rubric based on standards of one or more content area(s).	Teacher with individual students discuss rubric results and use rubric as basis for learning plan.
Analogies ask students to provide a visual or verbal analogy.	Teacher check-off in notebook as well as notations of preferred learning style and perhaps of student experience and/or interest.	Teacher can reorient future lessons based on level of understanding.
Group sampling asks selected students to complete any of the activities previously described, paying careful attention to include students who typically perform at various proficiency levels for any given row of a rubric.	Teacher uses rubric based on standards of one or more content area(s).	Teacher with individual students discuss rubric results and use rubric as basis for learning plan.

Source: *Using Assessment for Instruction*, published by the International Center for Leadership in Education

Overview

High-stakes standardized tests provide valuable student data to inform instructional areas in need of improvement. For too long, too many decisions in education were based on subjective judgments. Professional judgment is critical as educators become more comfortable in making decisions that are based on student achievement data. While state test scores are not the definitive measure of a well-educated student, they provide valuable insight to student learning. Teachers need to analyze such high quality data and use it to make adjustments in instruction; if school can then supplement with local student achievement data, continuous improvement can be monitored more effectively.

Leadership Strategies

This section highlights some of the best practices in analyzing student achievement in large-scale standardized assessments and related benchmark assessments.

The focus of leadership on student achievement data analysis includes three primary areas:

1. Leadership must provide an adequate information system that makes timely and useful data available.
2. Leadership must provide structure and opportunities for leadership teams to devote time to data analysis.
3. Leadership must provide adequate professional learning to support teachers and leadership teams in acquiring the knowledge and skills to reflect on student data effectively and to translate that information into instructional changes.

It is critical to have a robust information system in order to examine individual student data, group data, and subscores on individual strands of state assessment. Most school districts have contracted with one or several information systems software companies in order to provide adequate technological support in data analysis. These information/data systems must be directly accessible by teachers and teacher teams. Schools need to have adequate bandwidth for information flow and

Student Achievement Data Analysis

Chapter 10 provides greater detail on the overall use of data in instructional improvement.

accessibility to up-to-date computers for teachers to have convenient access to data. The data should be timely, with minimal delays between the data collection on state and benchmark assessments, and the availability of data through information systems.

The data must include individual student records as well as subscore data on individual strands or objectives of the assessment. Well-trained staff should be available in schools to create customized reports on individual groups of students or classes to make it easier for teachers and leadership teams to focus on individual groups of students. Many systems have created color-coded reports to highlight students quickly that are at risk versus those that are above standards. This procedure then allows teachers to focus quickly on meaningful numbers and students that need assistance.

A robust information system is of little value unless leadership teams have adequate time to analyze data.

A robust information system is of little value unless leadership teams have adequate time to analyze data. Time can be provided through regular team leader meetings or during professional development days when students are released from school. It may be necessary to compensate teacher leaders for additional time in order to provide adequate time to analyze student data.

Leadership teams may identify schoolwide statistics in order to create a sense of urgency and priorities for making instructional improvements. However, to make actual instructional improvements, it is critical to focus on individual students, groups of students, and individual strands of the examination. Looking at the extremes of low performance is important to identify those students who can benefit the most from changes in instruction.

The data system should include not only *state and benchmark assessments*, which show the progress of students over time. It is very difficult to identify areas in need of improvement using only a data set as a single measure. It is therefore helpful to have a good working relationship between leadership teams and technical support from the information system staff in order for leadership teams to request *specialized reports* that meet their individual needs.

The main responsibilities in data analysis for teachers are having the necessary skills to interpret the data and understand the meaning of various subscores and coding. Teachers also need to be allocated time

through professional development efforts or release time to analyze the achievement of their students. Teachers can identify students who are at risk and may need intervention efforts or additional instruction to bring them up to standards. This data may also identify students who have other factors that are contributing to poor student performance and therefore require counseling or intervention. By examining subtest scores on individual strands of the curriculum, teachers can begin to reflect on the quality of their teaching and identify areas in which they must either extend the time or modify the instruction in order to see improved results.

It is easy to be overwhelmed by large amounts of data. Schools that have been most successful in using data effectively have trained teachers and leadership teams to work collaboratively with instructional information systems specialists to identify specific areas of the curriculum and standards that must be addressed. This process can also help identify individual students who are at the greatest risk and then focus intensive instructional efforts on those students.

By examining subtest scores on individual strands of the curriculum, teachers can begin to reflect on the quality of their teaching and identify areas in which they must either extend the time or modify the instruction in order to see improved results.

Case Study of La Quinta High School

La Quinta High School is an example of a school using data and frequent common assessment to improve instruction and student achievement.

La Quinta High School, in La Quinta, Calif., is one of three comprehensive high schools in the Desert Sands Unified Schools District, located in the Coachella Valley. This K-12 district provides comprehensive education programs and services with significant special education, vocational, early childhood, and adult education programs to a multiethnic student population of diverse socioeconomic and cultural interests. La Quinta is a magnet school for the IB program, allowing students in the district to apply for transfers to take advantage of the program. Of the approximately 3,114 students enrolled, nearly 52% are Hispanic, 40% are white/non-Hispanic, 2% are Asian, and 2% are African-American. ELL students make up 8% of the student population, 36% are socioeconomically disadvantaged, and 8% have disabilities.

The school schedule has been designed to accommodate the needs of students, offering six periods a day for three days a week. On Wednesdays, periods 1, 3, and 5 meet for two hours each and on

Thursdays, periods 2, 4, and 6 meet for two hours each. A late start time on Tuesdays allows professional learning communities to meet for 40 minutes.

All students at La Quinta have access to a wide variety of academic programs that provide multiple pathways for student success. In addition to a strong college prep core curriculum, students may enhance their education through participation in IB and AP courses, the Health Academy, the Public Service Academy, the Culinary Arts Institute, JROTC, AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination), and an education pathway. While the district's graduation requirement is two years of math and science, La Quinta has long expected a minimum of three years of each and has encouraged four years of math and science. Many students fulfill these expectations.

Student Achievement

La Quinta has met all federal AYP targets for the past five years. The Academic Performance Index (API), the measure used by California, has increased by 161 points since the measurement's inception in 1999. La Quinta's current API is 773, which is well above the state average of 742. Student performance on the California Standards Tests (CST) continues to surpass county and state proficiency rates. The April 2008 CST results were particularly notable in that all student subgroups had shown growth in all academic areas. La Quinta students have higher proficiency rates than the district, county, and state in all grade levels of English language arts, geometry, history, Earth science, biology, and physics. For the 2008 census administration (given in grade 10) of the California High School Exit Examination, 90% of the students passed the English section of the exam and 87% passed the math section on their first attempt.

The culture of open access encourages students to challenge themselves by enrolling in advanced courses; in 2008, 584 students were enrolled in 1,773 seats in IB and AP courses. For the third consecutive year, La Quinta was recognized by *Newsweek* as one of America's top high schools, based on the number of IB and AP courses taken divided by the number of graduating seniors. This ranking recognizes the top 5% of high schools in the nation.

Striking gains in the proficiency levels of students with disabilities (SWD) occurred over the past two years. That subgroup's statewide two-year

API growth was 32 points, compared with La Quinta's increase of 78 points, bringing the API of La Quinta's students with disabilities to 574, compared with the statewide SWD API of 463. La Quinta leaders believe that a major factor contributing to the increase is the in-class collaboration model. Special education students are mainstreamed into all courses, and the core content classes are team taught by a content expert and a special education expert.

Never content with the status quo, La Quinta instructional leaders continue to explore methods and resources for increasing student achievement. Based upon data from state and SAT tests and current research, a Universal Literacy Project was launched this year. Research pointed out that student writing does more than demonstrate the student's writing skills, it promotes higher order thinking and understanding in other subjects, and helps the teacher to grasp student understanding for evaluation and reflection of their teaching practices. Detailed plans were put in place to include related professional development activities; responsibilities of departments and the literacy coach; project criteria; and descriptions of the purpose, product, and assessment. A literacy coach assists staff by providing resources, facilitating the process, and compiling data to analyze the process and make recommendations for the following year. A steering committee has developed and assisted in facilitating the initiative with support and feedback from a cross-curricular committee. All students are strongly encouraged to take at least three years of math and science. While this is not a requirement, the degree of compliance has been remarkable.

High-quality Curriculum and Instruction

All students at La Quinta participate in a rigorous, relevant, and coherent standards-based curriculum that supports achievement of the academic standards and graduation goals. Thirty-two content teams make extensive use of site, district, state, and national data to determine the focus of instruction, set goals, and assess learning. Each content team uses a prescribed process to select key standards collaboratively that will be addressed in their classes.

The implementation and improvement of the school's curriculum is an ongoing process that is facilitated through targeted, sustained

professional development. La Quinta is dedicated to increasing the rigor and relevance of classroom lessons throughout the school. To this end, the entire teaching staff has received training in using the Rigor/Relevance Framework. The goal is to craft lessons that will fall into Quadrant D, indicating that they are truly rigorous and relevant. Each teacher is now required to deliver at least two Quadrant D lessons a year, as validated by the principal's observation. Posters of the framework are displayed in every classroom to serve as reminders of effective teaching and learning.

Use of Data at Classroom and Building Levels

During the International Center's High School Reinvention Symposium in 2005, La Quinta participants chose "using data" as a focus area for one of its action plans. They began with the big picture in mind, agreeing that:

- School improvement should be informed by data, rather than driven by it. For example, test scores alone should not be the sole factor in determining subject content.
- Both qualitative and quantitative data should be analyzed.
- The view of data types and sources should be broadened.
- A data cycle process should be followed that includes gathering and analyzing data determining and implementing action at the classroom level, assessing classroom action results, and reframing problems and crafting new plans of action as necessary.

To assist in determining what to teach and how much to teach, 32 different content teams use two significant documents published by the International Center: the National Essential Skills Study (NESS) of the 30 most important topics in English language arts, math, science, and social science; and the International Center's Curriculum Matrix Resources that correlate the California standards in English language arts, math, science, and social studies with state assessments required by NCLB and the results of NESS. Other resources beneficial to them are curriculum maps and pacing guides, student performance data from state tests, district benchmark assessments, and common site assessments.

Instructional Leadership — Quadrant D Leadership Practices

Each semester, the teams work to identify 8-10 key standards for their content areas that are based on frequency of occurrence in state assessments, as well as other indicators such as pacing guides, curriculum maps, and demographic impact. Instructional strategies are selected for teaching the standards, including strategies that are most effective for English learners. A process is established for identifying and collecting relevant student data.

To analyze the implementation of key standards, teams review data to:

- determine which data is essential to student learning and at what level of proficiency
- determine areas in which students did well and in which they struggled
- use pre- and post-assessment data to write SMART goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely
- determine which instructional strategies reflect best practices
- devise an assessment plan

Teams continue to work with the key standards and examine student work to select instructional strategies that will provide appropriate challenges and support for all students.

Teachers also make use of the district's Educator's Assessment and Data Management System (EADMS). Through this education software program, they are able to access state test results as well as current academic and student demographic data. The system has a number of features, some of which allow teachers to create standards-based tests, schedule in-class and online testing, and print and scan their own answer sheets.

Recognizing that data are more than just test scores, La Quinta used the Learning Criteria to Support 21st Century Learners, a set of criteria that helps schools to determine their success in preparing students for current assessments as well as for future roles and responsibilities. To measure to a fuller extent the elements that are part of the total student, staff developed the La Quinta High School Learning Criteria to measure student success in the four dimensions of Foundation Learning, Stretch Learning, Learner Engagement, and Personal Skill Development. The

entire education community is kept apprised, not only of standardized test scores but of the learning criteria assessments as well.

Using data wisely has resulted in improvements in student learning; test scores; teaching strategies; curriculum prioritization; professional collaboration; schoolwide relationships; confidence of the community; and the alignment of vision, goals, curriculum, instruction, and assessment. In addition, the need for a literacy initiative was revealed, and a literacy project is being developed.

Using data effectively means overcoming a variety of obstacles, not the least of which is teacher resistance. La Quinta leaders suggest that the following elements be in place: a leadership team that includes key teachers and counselors; focused, sustained professional development; an accountability structure for PLCs; time within the school day for collaboration; and an expert who can provide clear explanations of data and directions for data analysis. The number of meetings can be reduced when technology is used for web-based discussion groups and e-mail messages.

La Quinta staff rely on extensive use of varied types of data to evaluate and improve programs, initiatives, curriculum, and instruction, with the ultimate goal of increasing student achievement.





Chapter 7

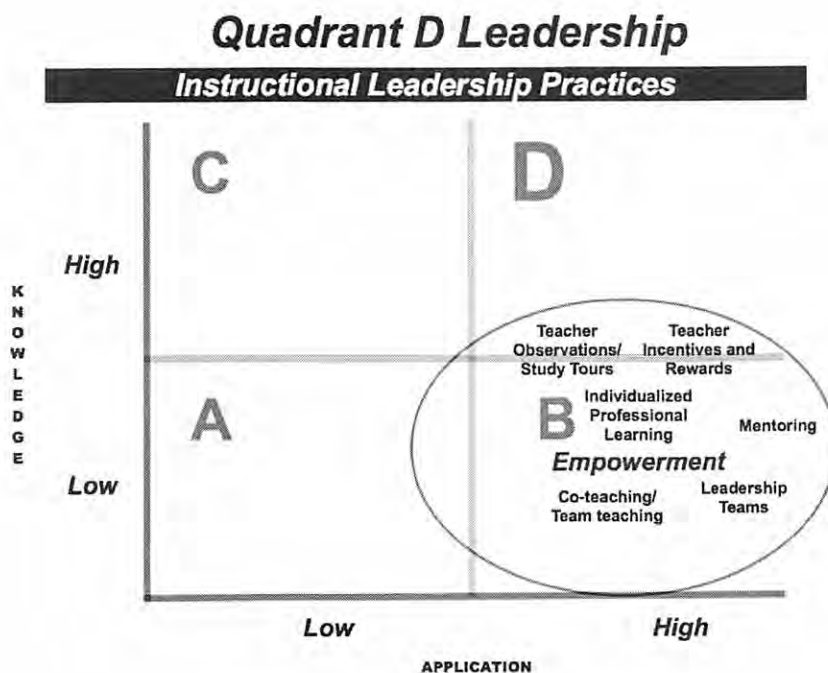
Empowerment Practices

The leadership practices most closely associated with Quadrant B leadership are called “empowerment practices.” While these practices support high levels of leadership application and empowerment, leaders who rely predominantly on these practices still need to build staff and student background knowledge to embrace a common vision in order to advance to Quadrant D-level leadership.

Empowerment practices appear under Quadrant B on the Quadrant D Leadership Framework.

Empowerment Practices

- Leadership Teams
- Mentoring
- Co-teaching and Team Teaching
- Teacher Incentives and Rewards
- Teacher Observations and Study Tours
- Individualized Professional Learning



The focus on empowerment as a Quadrant D Leadership strategy requires that schools look at structures and activities that directly involve as many staff as possible in making decisions and taking action toward school involvement. This effort is best accomplished through a team approach. By having groups of people work together in an environment of trust, open communication, and innovation, schools are better able to achieve a culture of continuous improvement. Having several “heads around a problem” offers more ideas for solutions and gathers input from people that are most affected by decisions. While using teams is not an efficient process for *making* change — since time must be spent building team relationships before they can be effective — schools nevertheless accrue consistent benefits from using team approaches effectively.

Leadership Strategies

Leadership is started and modeled by the traditional school principal, but it is not reserved for a single individual. Successful schools abound with models of distributed and shared leadership. In nearly all schools, it takes many leaders in various roles to make a successful school. This does not mean that a school has many independent decision makers who all lead a school toward their own unique visions of learning. Shared leadership is successful only when there is a *common* vision for the school community, and individual teachers and groups of teachers make incremental decisions that are consistent with that vision.

For each leadership team in a building to function effectively, they need the following attributes:

- clear responsibilities that are consistent with the overall school vision
- opportunities to meet frequently
- accountability through recording and communicating decisions and actions
- skills in communication and consensus decision making

The following suggestions are some of the most common team structures in schools. No school should have all of these structures; rather, different situations will dictate two or three of these teams that would be most appropriate for a specific school.

Leadership Teams

By having groups of people work together in an environment of trust, open communication, and innovation, schools are better able to achieve a culture of continuous improvement.

Shared leadership is successful only when there is a *common* vision for the school community, and individual teachers and groups of teachers make incremental decisions that are consistent with that vision.

This resource kit includes a DVD related to this topic: *Quadrant D Leadership — A Team Approach to Leading Instruction*.

Grade Level Teams

Probably the most typical example of staff collaboration is grade level teams. These types of teams are very common in elementary schools, where teachers at a particular grade level meet to compare curriculum plans and ensure that instruction is similar across classrooms.

Grade level teams are an essential aspect of staff collaboration. They represent a strategy for sharing teaching ideas and discussing students who are not succeeding. Whether the team has a designated leader is usually dependent on the size of the school. If there were a grade level team leader, he or she would participate in a school leadership team.

The most frequent way to design and/or organize elementary schools is by a common grade level in each wing of the school. Students of a particular age can learn together more easily and teachers who teach a common grade can collaborate more effectively.

Elementary schools have started to create vertical teams to examine strategies such as teaching math across each grade level. The primary purpose is to reduce duplication or gaps in grade-to-grade expectations. These types of vertical teams may be necessary on an ad hoc basis to provide for a scaffolding of curriculum and an alignment with standards.

Middle Level House Teams

Over the past two decades, middle schools have evolved into a unique set of organizations and instructional principles as they have changed from junior high schools, which were organized similar to high schools with separate subjects and departmental structures. One of the most common principles of middle schools now is to organize groups of students with a common team of academic teachers. All students in these groups receive instruction from a group of teachers. The common term used for these groups is "house structure."

Frequently, the school is organized so that houses are located in a cluster of classrooms in order to reduce student movement in the school and increase teacher collaboration. House teams are very effective structures for teacher collaboration toward individual student achievement, as well as for sharing strategies for building student relationships and creating a positive learning culture. Frequent conversation among house teams

House teams are very effective structures for teacher collaboration toward individual student achievement, as well as for sharing strategies for building student relationships and creating a positive learning culture.

helps avert student problems before failure results. Collaboration can also stimulate opportunities to add relevance to instruction through interdisciplinary unit design.

High School Grade Level Teams

At the secondary school level, teachers are traditionally grouped by subject area, which makes it easy for teachers in a common subject area to collaborate. As a result, students move frequently and over long distances in school. Such a structure makes it challenging for teachers who have the same students to collaborate and little teaming of teachers at any grade level occurs. Grouping teachers by subject structure gives precedent to the needs of the content over the needs of the students.

Grade level teams in high school are beginning to place greater attention on student achievement. Occurring most commonly at the 9th grade level or whichever grade is the first year of high school, grade level teams are reducing student failures in the transition year to high school. Many schools are facilitating grade level teams by clustering classrooms of teachers that need to collaborate around groups of students. Greater student-centered collaboration is facilitated by classroom assignment and building construction.

Grade level teams at the secondary level may be necessary as concerns rise about the lack of student achievement, particularly in the 9th grade. Such collaboration allows teachers to examine student success (or failure) across all subjects. If there is an inconsistent pattern of failure, ideas can ensue about what type of intervention would be successful for a particular student. Even if there is no obvious solution, the group of teachers is likely to be more creative in identifying a solution. The group can also commit to making changes in all of the classrooms, rather than each teacher experimenting and trying to intervene with his or her own solution.

This type of group collaboration is an important avenue to early and effective intervention and helping to make students more successful. In allocating time for teams to meet at the secondary level, and assigning grade level team meeting time, students are likely to benefit to a greater degree. Teachers will naturally find time to meet and discuss ideas with teachers of the same subject, but it is often challenging to find a common meeting time for a grade level team to meet.

Administrative Leadership Team

A single person, usually a principal, traditionally led small schools. As schools grew and school responsibilities expanded, more staff were added in non-instructional leadership roles. Large schools now might have six or more assistant principals. Other school functions, such as counseling, special education, athletics, assessment, security, extracurricular activities, professional development, and building and grounds, might have full-time personnel devoted to these areas. Coordination of functions is critical; representatives of these functions often form a school administrative leadership team to work with the principal in developing and implementing school policy. Some of these roles have direct relationships to instructional improvement.

School Leadership Team

Many different staff development structures are possible for building leadership teams. For example, in an elementary school there might be a traditional team composed of an elementary teacher from each grade level. In a secondary school, teachers might come together from each department. In a school with multiple magnet programs or career academies, there might be a leadership team representing just that portion of the school community. Multiple teams might also be formed around yet other types of school functions, priorities, or goals, such as safety, instruction, partnerships, literacy, or technology. School leadership teams provide opportunities for the inclusion of teachers; teams do not need to be limited to staff in non-instructional administrative positions.

Instructional Leadership Team

Another way to structure a team to expand leadership is with a specific instructional leadership team. Having a specific team with this title elevates the importance of instruction and instructional improvement. The team can include staff with specific expertise and talents such as staff developers or instructional coaches, rather than staff with specific roles such as assistant principals or teachers. This team would discuss instructional needs, professional development activities, observation of instruction, structures to share, best practices, and teacher coaching. Traditionally in secondary schools, department chairpersons representing each subject area might have constituted the instructional leadership, but schools are finding today that a more dynamic and flexible group can create a better focus on instruction.

Traditionally in secondary schools, department chairpersons representing each subject area might have constituted the instructional leadership, but schools are finding today that a more dynamic and flexible group can create a better focus on instruction.

Data Team

In recent years, so much emphasis has been placed on student achievement data that the volume and detail of such data requires extensive time for analysis. Burdensome to many teachers, it also leaves all analysis to each teacher and can result in inconsistencies due to different interpretations.

Many schools, therefore, have created specific data teams. These teams can develop greater expertise in understanding the nuances of complex student achievement reports and can provide a more focused schoolwide approach to improvement. The entire school staff can depend on this group to have a deep understanding of student achievement and then they can prioritize areas for improvement. If a school uses a data team, try to rotate selected teachers through the data team to give more teachers experience in working with student data.

Student Advisory Team

Quadrant D Leadership is about extending the responsibilities to students as well as to staff. Schools will need structures to support students as school leaders. Some schools have student councils with representatives from different grades. The student councils function well in some schools, but in others, the positions provide mere recognition of personal popularity, and the council does not represent student populations accurately.

Principals have often created other student advisory or leadership structures. In secondary schools, leadership might be a class or club that is open to all students. This leadership group could organize into committees to discuss school policies and plan events. Some principals create advisory groups of students selected randomly who meet with leadership on a regular basis. Whatever the structure, principals should seek to expand the input and perspective of students in leadership actions.

Tools for Leadership Teams

The following tools are included in this section:

- Team Effectiveness Inventory
- Team Problem-Solving Form
- Effective Decision-Making Checklist

- Effective Meetings Checklist
- Meeting Roadmap
- Sample Meeting Ground Rules
- Minutes of Meeting Sample Format
- Success Analysis Protocol for Leadership Teams



Team Effectiveness Inventory

The following survey can be used to obtain feedback from team members as to the effectiveness of teams.

5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree

	5	4	3	2	1
Clear Common Purpose					
We have a clear sense of our collective goals and priorities.					
Our goals are challenging yet achievable.					
Team members are highly committed to our goals, placing less priority on individual goals or interests when necessary.					
Team Processes					
We have effective processes for sharing information.					
We have effective processes for solving problems, making decisions, and running meetings.					
We have effective processes for ensuring individual accountability and coordinating individual efforts.					
Group Dynamics					
Team members listen to, respect, and understand each other.					
Conflict is dealt with openly and is considered important to decision making and personal growth.					
We are a supportive, cooperative, and cohesive group.					
Interpersonal Relationships					
I trust the members of my team.					
Members feel their unique personalities are appreciated and used well.					
Team members contribute equally.					

Instructional Leadership — Quadrant D Leadership Practices

	5	4	3	2	1
Satisfaction					
I enjoy working with my team members.					
I am able to make good use of my skills and abilities on this team.					
Considering everything, it is a pleasure to be on this team.					
Support					
We have adequate time to meet as a team.					
We have access to data and information we need to make decisions.					
We have adequate training in the skills we need.					
Student focus					
Student needs are given priority in decisions.					
The team focuses positively on improving achievement and avoids blaming students.					
All students are respected and personal information is kept confidential.					
Creativity					
Divergent ideas are encouraged.					
We encourage the open exploration of problems, as well as new ideas and approaches for solving them.					
The creative talents of team members are used well.					
Performance					
We regularly achieve our goals.					
Members find team meetings efficient and productive, and look forward to this time together.					
Members know clearly when the team has met with success and we celebrate our achievements equally.					

Source: *Leading Change in High School*, published by the International Center for Leadership in Education.



Team Problem-Solving Form

Identify one problem on which the team will focus in a regular team meeting. List the data used to define the problem. Then brainstorm actions to take and the data that will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of actions taken.

Identified Problem

Data to Identify Need

Actions to Be Taken

Data to Measure Results



Effective Decision-Making Checklist

Use this checklist to evaluate the effectiveness of your decisions.

Yes	No	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Everyone was familiar with the decision method being followed, e.g., consensus, majority vote.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Enough time was devoted to the item.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The facilitator was objective and open-minded in facilitating discussion of the item.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The item voted on was clearly stated and understood.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The item voted on related to a measurable goal.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	All ideas were considered and modified as appropriate.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	More than one solution was explored before a decision was made.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Everyone had an opportunity to raise questions, give opinions, express agreement disagreement.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Members with disagreeing opinions were given time to express their concerns, hesitations, and dissenting thoughts.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	If consensus agreement was used, all team members were supportive of the decision.



Effective Meetings Checklist

Use this checklist to evaluate the effectiveness of your meetings.

Yes	No	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	An agenda was prepared and distributed before the meeting.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Members arrived on time for the meeting and stayed until the meeting's closure.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The meeting started and ended on time.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The facilitator was prepared and managed the team's processes.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The team focused on the topics under discussion.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The team's work was clearly defined, had purpose, and related to overall goals.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Team members' discussion focused on ideas and their implementation rather than logistics, housekeeping details, and other minutia.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The members adhered to the team's norms.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The members came to the meeting with work completed that they agreed to do and were willing to accept work assignments.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Action plans were developed to follow through on team's decisions (e.g., Who will do the work? What will be done? When?) Timeline was identified.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Evaluation feedback was provided by the members at the close of the meeting.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Individuals with specific responsibilities (e.g., timekeeper, facilitator, recorder, process observer) added to the effectiveness of the team.



Meeting Roadmap

[Team Name-Date]

What	Results	How	Time
Agenda Items	Expected result during this meeting related to this item	Process (e.g., discussion, presentation, observation, resource person, question and answer, reporting)	Time allocated to this item

What	Results	How	Time
Example			
1. Get organized	Agreement on agenda	Discussion	5 minutes
2.			
3.			
4.			
Feedback	+ / Δ	Go around	5 minutes

+ = strengths: what was good

Δ = what should be changed for next time



Sample Meeting Ground Rules

- ▶ Respect others; be on time; listen with interest.
- ▶ Interact with others.
- ▶ Participate in discussions.
- ▶ Be willing to compromise.
- ▶ Keep the best interest of the students in mind.
- ▶ Treat everyone in a dignified manner.
- ▶ Keep side conversations to a minimum.
- ▶ Support decisions made by consensus.
- ▶ Be honest and open to the ideas of others.
- ▶ Make a contribution; everyone is responsible for team success.
- ▶ Learn from the past, let go of it, and move forward.
- ▶ Focus on issues and content, not personalities and people.
- ▶ Be creative when appropriate and fact/logic-driven when needed.
- ▶ Follow through on agreements and action items.
- ▶ Encourage the expression of different points of view.
- ▶ Ask questions for clarification when you do not understand.
- ▶ Review the effectiveness of each meeting during the meeting.
- ▶ Check for consensus before finalizing decisions.



Minutes of Meeting Sample Format

Name of Team

Date /Location of Meeting

Facilitator:

Recorder:

Timekeeper:

Process observer:

Members present:

Members absent:

Agenda item:

Discussion:

Action: Yes No

What?

By whom?

When?

Announcements:

Next Meeting Date:

Assigned Roles for Next Meeting:

Facilitator:

Recorder:

Timekeeper:

Process observer:



Success Analysis Protocol for Leadership Teams

Roles: Timekeeper/facilitator, two teams, a reporter for each team

The facilitator's role is to help the group to keep focused on how this practice is different from other team practices. The analysis of what makes this practice so successful is the purpose of the protocol. "Best practice" is defined as a process that has proven to be highly effective in achieving the intended outcome.

1. Discuss as a team and then write a short description of your team's best practice this year. Note what it is about the practice that made it so successful. Be sure to answer the question, "What made this experience different from other team experiences?" Identify a person to report on the team's success and the analysis of what made it successful. (20 minutes)
2. The reporter shares their team's best practice and why it was so successful. (3 minutes)
3. The other team asks clarifying questions about the details of the best practice. (3 minutes)
4. Group members analyze what they heard about the other team's success and offer additional insights about how this practice is different than other team practices. Probing questions are appropriate and the presenter's participation in the conversation is encouraged. (3-5 minutes)
5. The presenter responds to the group's analysis of what made this experience so successful. (1 minute)
6. The other team's reporter shares a best practice and what made it so successful. Repeat steps 3-5. (10-12 minutes)
7. Debrief the protocol as a whole group. (5 minutes) Possible questions include:
 - ▶ What worked well?
 - ▶ How might we apply what we learned to other teamwork?
 - ▶ How might students use this process to reflect on their work?
 - ▶ What adaptations to this protocol might improve the process?

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Case Study of South Houston Intermediate School

South Houston Intermediate School, in South Houston, Texas, is an example of a middle school using leadership teams effectively in their improvement efforts.

South Houston Intermediate School is located in an urban area. It is one of 10 comprehensive intermediate schools in the Pasadena Independent School District and is defined as a Title I campus with a student population of 84% Hispanic, 10% African-American, 4% Caucasian, and 2% other ethnicities. Of the approximately 700 students enrolled at South Houston, 87% receive a free or reduced-price lunch, 55% are at risk, 38% are English language learners, and 10% have disabilities and are in special education or 504 programs. Diversity is what makes the school strong. South Houston is currently taking steps to continue to raise its scores to become an exemplary campus in Texas.

The South Houston staff include 101 employees, with 71 teachers, two counselors, three assistant principals, two support facilitators, and the principal. Principal Laura Gomez leads the South Houston Intermediate School Administrative Team. She has been a teacher, assistant principal, and a principal for 15 years in the district. As a teacher, she was selected Teacher of the Year. As an assistant principal at Bondy Intermediate, Mrs. Gomez was selected Assistant Principal of the Year. During the 2008-09 school year, Mrs. Gomez was selected Region IV Principal of the Year by the district. The Administrative Team assists in the implementation of the many changes that take place on campus. A Campus Improvement Team analyzes, approves, and monitors the ideas and changes.

South Houston is a unique place where a team of educators come together to set high standards for student achievement, while maintaining a warm and nurturing learning climate. Academic achievement for all students at South Houston remains critical. However, the goal is to educate the whole child, so students develop into lifelong learners and active community members. They encourage students to be problem solvers and to make a positive impact to society.

The structure of South Houston is a 10-period block schedule, with 70-minute class periods every other day. Unlike other subjects, math and science meet daily for 70 minutes. School begins at 8:20 a.m.

and concludes at 3:30 p.m. Tutoring is held for 30 minutes before the beginning of each school day. Tutoring provides the opportunity for students to see their teacher when extra assistance is needed. Extended-day classes meet for an hour beginning at 3:35 p.m. for students who are at risk of failing courses and/or the state assessment. An in-school program assists students in maximizing their academic potential on the state assessment exams. For students who are not able to stay after school due to a hectic home or work schedule, Saturday Camps are offered from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. twice a month. The Adopt-an-Indian Program allows every teacher, administrator, and counselor on his or her campus to adopt a minimum of one student for the year. The relationships that are built through this program assist them in developing students both socially and academically through one-on-one mentoring.

The TAKS (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills) scores at South Houston have significantly improved since 2007-08. The academic gains have ranged from 7% to 31% in different subject areas. Only the most severely disabled students, about 1% of their total student population, take the TAKS Alternative Test. Ninety-nine percent of the students take an accountable state exam. To improve data, the school starts with reviewing data. Administrators and teachers have gone through the Kilgo training, which has assisted them in focusing on the data that needs attention in order to increase scores in every subject area. South Houston uses this information for lesson planning, instruction, in-school tutoring, extended-day programs, and morning tutorials. Previously, the school was on Technical Assistance (TAT) status as dictated by the Texas Education Agency and had not made AYP. Given its highly effective solutions, the school is no longer on TAT and made AYP in 2008-09.

Department teams by grade level subject area meet on a weekly basis for lesson planning and to evaluate progress that can determine changes in curriculum — changes that may be needed to ensure student success. Academic achievement gains are improving through the addition of rigor and relevance to the lesson planning. Each administrator oversees an academic department team as well as a grade level team, in order to be involved in instructional development, to provide input to the teams, and to take feedback to the Administrative Team. Each teacher is part of a grade level team. There are four academic teams at South Houston: two for 7th grade and two for 8th grade. Over 90% of the students at each grade level are teamed, giving the teachers the opportunity to share the progress of their students.

Instructional Leadership — Quadrant D Leadership Practices

Each team is composed of a reading, math, science, writing, history, ESL, and special education teacher/staff member. They meet every other day for 70 minutes to discuss students and meet with parents. They also discuss the progress of each struggling child and decide on a plan of action and/or intervention. *READ 180* aids struggling students in sheltered English classes in improving their reading skills and increasing their English vocabulary. Recommended interventions may include classroom accommodations, behavior management plans and contracts, extended day, tutoring, counseling, or placement in the Adopted Program. The results of these practices have resulted in a strong student academic focus. Failure is not an option, as no child is left behind.

South Houston has a Campus Improvement Plan that is revised every year based on the ever-changing needs of students. A comprehensive needs assessment is conducted yearly so that the improvement plan is relevant. The assessment is also used to plan curriculum and focus on areas of weakness for implementing change. Every subject area, including electives, is represented on the Campus Improvement Team. The team works with its departments in providing input for all programs that are implemented in the school. Its input is valued as it takes ownership of the many changes that have taken place every year on campus. Everyone involved shares a vision and trusts that these positive changes will come alive.

Rigor and relevance in every classroom is also critical to South Houston's success. Many steps have been taken to reach this goal. International Center Senior Consultant Lin Kuzmich has instructed district administrators and teachers many times during the past two years. She has also worked with many district committees to increase the relevancy in their lessons in order to reach all students. Teachers are very involved in this process, as some of them are on the district curriculum writing teams. Time is provided at the beginning of each year and throughout the school year to train and mentor new teachers. Through their department teams, teachers strive to create lessons in Quadrant D of the Rigor/Relevance Framework. Teachers regularly visit other classrooms to view Quadrant D lessons. They learn from one another and provide constructive feedback to improve instruction.

The teaming structure at SHIS is so effective that the school was featured in a national video production in 2009 that was based on the book by Gregory, Gayle and Kuzmich, Lin, *Teacher Teams that Get Results*.

Through their department teams, teachers strive to create lessons in Quadrant D of the Rigor/Relevance Framework. Teachers regularly visit other classrooms to view Quadrant D lessons. They learn from one another and provide constructive feedback to improve instruction.

Mentoring

The trust and honesty developed through a meaningful mentoring program establishes space for classroom observations and demonstrations by both the mentor for the mentee and the mentee for the mentor.

Mentoring provides support structures for “new” teachers. This type of support helps new teachers learn the school rules and policies, understand expectations, perceive existing staff relationships, and become familiar with the physical locations and resources in the building. A good mentoring program also assists the mentee with improving instructional practice.

Typically, new teachers attend training sessions, as well as receive the expertise and guidance of a mentor for their first year in the district. The training might focus on district expectations, curriculum, lesson design, instructional strategies, relationship-building styles, and assessment. Staff in a mentor role observe the new teacher’s classroom and assist with instruction, management, classroom systems and procedures, and opportunities for professional growth. The mentor might also model or demonstrate effective teaching strategies for the mentee. The trust and honesty developed through a meaningful mentoring program establishes space for classroom observations and demonstrations by both the mentor for the mentee and the mentee for the mentor.

Leadership Strategies

Mentoring should be considered only one part of overall teacher induction and support, and school and district professional development.

Mentoring offers many benefits for beginning teachers; however, it is not a universal solution or quick fix to teacher quality and instructional improvement. Mentoring should be considered only one part of overall teacher induction and support, and school and district professional development. School leaders play a critical role in supervising and supporting new teachers. While mentoring is an excellent practice that can supplement administrative supervision, it should not reduce the need for such supervision. Mentoring should also be connected to the broader ongoing professional development for instructional staff.

Mentoring takes time; it should not be seen as something that happens beyond the normal workday. A good mentoring program will involve conversations before and after school, and mentors should be encouraged and anticipate the extra time that is necessary to be available for advice. However, the *core* of the mentoring program should be structured within the normal school day. Reducing teaching assignments and/or providing additional stipends can accomplish this. Teachers should not be expected to squeeze mentoring time into an already busy day. While this effort may

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seem like additional costs for each new teacher, it can lead to reduced costs by staff not needing to be rehired or staff not having to suffer the ill effects of a sub-par teacher.

Mentoring depends on good relationships between the mentor and mentee. Selection of mentors and assignments to mentees should be done carefully while considering personality styles and interests. Not all great teachers make good mentors. Also, it may be better to assign a mentor with great personal skills rather than assign a mentor that simply works in the same subject area or grade level.

The following characteristics should be sought when selecting a mentor:

- demonstrates mastery of pedagogical skills and curricula knowledge
- shows strong interpersonal and communication skills
- reflects a willingness to participate in the program and devote time to assist the new teacher
- demonstrates a commitment to his or her own professional learning
- possesses the ability to allow the new teacher to develop his or her own effective teaching style

The following examples suggest a range of models or approaches that could describe mentoring and its purpose for different education contexts. The “ideal” model would depend on the prerogatives of the individual school.

Partner System

When a new teacher begins employment, a colleague from within the same subject or grade level is assigned as his or her partner mentor, with the responsibility to orient the new teacher to the organizational culture. This process may include becoming familiar with the school campus, the department he or she is going to be working in, and key policies and procedures that will affect the new teacher early in his or her employment.

Experienced Teacher Novice

Within the subject area or grade level, an experienced teacher is assigned as a mentor for the new teacher. This assignment is a more

formal responsibility than the partner mentor. There is an expectation and embedded process that all experienced teachers will assume in their mentor role as the need arises. Experienced means the person has taught for a minimum of three years. The experienced teacher's role could focus on general organizational orientation, but he or she is probably more effectively utilized by assisting with aspects of actual teaching practice. Aspects could include observation of teaching and giving feedback, creating opportunities for the new teacher to observe other experienced teachers, and working through the administrative tasks directly associated with the teaching job. Frequently in the experienced teacher-novice model, a reduced teaching responsibility is given for both in order that they will have time to devote to mentor-mentee conversations.

School Mentors

School mentors are experienced teachers who are spread across the school and can be accessed by any teacher; the mentee does not have to be from the same department or grade level as the campus mentor. School mentors can be available for anything relating to teaching practice and ongoing professional development. In this scenario, the mentee may be either a new teacher or an experienced teacher. The school mentor becomes the designated "distinguished educator" that other teachers can approach for advice.

Group mentoring can encourage collaboration and professional learning across the institution in a structured or less-structured environment. The *group-mentoring model* has more potential for fostering workplace learning than the more traditional *one-to-one mentoring model*. The mentor-mentees may be inter-departmental or may come from across the school. If the purpose of the mentoring is more generic in nature, either scenario is feasible. If the group sustains itself and becomes more cohesive, the group's purpose could shift to focus more on specific issues or problems that the mentees would like to address.

Centralized Mentor Resource

This resource is often based within staff development or human resources. It might be a school resource, but more often it is a district function. This role provides mentoring for teaching staff, and more commonly for new teachers. Because of other institutional induction processes, the centralized mentor may focus solely on supporting teaching and learning practices, rather than on general orientation aspects. An interesting

offshoot of this resource could be that the new teacher starts to build a teaching portfolio, eventually to be used for advancement within the institution.

Tool for Mentoring



Leadership Tasks in Creating a Mentoring Program

Planning

- ▶ Identify the scope of mentoring needs based upon the number of new and beginning teachers in school.
- ▶ Identify a mentor coordinator to plan and implement mentoring.
- ▶ Create a model for the operation of the mentoring program, including responsibilities of each person and non-instructional time devoted to mentoring.
- ▶ Bargain appropriate contract language or a memorandum of agreement with the teacher association for the mentoring program.
- ▶ Obtain school board approval and financial support for the mentoring program.
- ▶ Develop an application process for inviting and selecting mentors.
- ▶ Establish evaluation criteria for measuring the effectiveness of the mentoring program.

Implementation

- ▶ Identify and match mentors and mentees.
- ▶ Design a training program for mentors.
- ▶ Conduct a training program for mentors.
- ▶ Establish a school calendar for mentoring activities.
- ▶ Establish record-keeping forms and procedures for mentoring.
- ▶ Develop a list of suggested mentoring activities.
- ▶ Create a library of resource materials for mentors and mentees.
- ▶ Conduct a formative evaluation of the mentoring program, including feedback from mentors.
- ▶ Conduct a summative evaluation of the mentoring program, including feedback from principals and supervisors.
- ▶ Modify the program based on evaluations.

Case Study of Averill Park School District

The Averill Park School District, in Averill Park, N.Y., has a well-developed mentoring program.

Averill Park School District established a formal mentoring program in 1996. The district's Mentor Task Force subsequently designed a plan for the Mentor Program, which the Board of Education approved in March 2001. Since that time, the Mentor Program has been a part of the district's overall Professional Development Plan (PDP).

In October 2005, the Mentor Task Force reconvened to review the Mentor Program to better reflect the relationship between the Mentor Program and the PDP. The primary charge of the reconvened Mentor Task Force was to revise the Mentor Program plan so that it would closely align to the revised state teacher certification requirements. Mentor Task Force members met bimonthly throughout the 2005-06 school year to make the necessary revisions. As they did so, they considered input from mentors, mentees, district administrators, and an independent evaluation done in the 2004-05 school year by Syracuse University.

The plan is the result of the Mentor Task Force's efforts. It includes elements required by New York State. Additionally, it includes elements deemed necessary by the task force. The plan specifically identifies the following elements:

- mentor selection procedure
- roles and responsibilities of mentors
- responsibilities of mentor coordinators
- roles and responsibilities of mentees
- confidentiality procedures
- mentor and mentee training
- types of mentoring activities
- documentation activities
- time allotted for mentoring
- compensation

Forms and guidelines
are available at: [www.averillpark.k12.ny.us/
mentorprogram/programs_
mentor.html](http://www.averillpark.k12.ny.us/mentorprogram/programs_mentor.html)

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- roles and responsibilities of building administrators
- program evaluation

Forms developed for the Mentor Program include:

- Mentor Teacher Application
- Checklist for Mentors
- Program Coordinator Evaluation
- Mentor-Intern Release Time Log
- Log for Mentoring Activities Performed
- Mentee Requirements for First-Year Teachers
- Suggested Mentoring Activities (for second- and third-year teachers)
- Exit Interview Form
- Mentee Feedback Evaluation Form

Teachers who would like to be involved as mentors in the mentor program must have tenure and it is desirable that each has a minimum of five years of experience.

When the program was first developed, mentors met by building in a support group format with all pre-tenured teachers. Groups met monthly for two hours or biweekly for one hour either before or after school. From the mentee and mentor evaluations, many teachers wanted to have individual mentors, so in 2006 the district moved to individual mentors for all mentees. In 2007, the policy was revised to first-year teachers having individual mentors and second- and third-year mentees or mentees who were new to the district and who had teaching experience meeting in small groups of no more than three mentees to one mentor.

The first-year mentee must meet with his or her mentor for at least 15 hours before or after school, but they are compensated for up to 45 hours a year. This is not to say that many pairs meet many more hours than this. Mentees must attend three building level meetings. They must also take three release days for observation, team teaching curriculum planning, peer coaching, or a preapproved choice. Mentees may also optional workshops that the mentors may also participate in. Some of the workshops are Certification, Classroom Management, Know Your Contract, and Reading in the Content Areas.

Second- and third-year teachers are encouraged to participate in the Mentor Program, but they are not required. If they participate, the requirements are that they meet with their mentor for at least 15 hours before or after school, but they are compensated for up to 30 hours. They must attend three building level meetings. Release days are encouraged, but are optional as are the workshops. Approximately 80% of pre-tenured teachers elect to stay in the program for the full three years.

Mentoring does not take place monthly in two-hour blocks, but is an integral part of the teaching day. In addition to the support group meetings, mentees and mentors also meet informally before and after school, during prep times, at lunch, and by phone. The district recognizes and reflects these additional time commitments in the compensation received by mentors. Mentors earn a mentor stipend as determined by the collective bargaining agreement.

Mentors have the option of being involved at various levels. Mentors who take on additional responsibilities such as tracking attendance, acting as a liaison to the building principal, or planning, typing, and distributing monthly agendas and minutes receive additional credit.

Mentors must attend summer initial training, planning sessions, and Danielson training as part of their mentor requirement. Mentors must ensure at least 15 hours of seat time available per year for each mentee. Mentors also attend quarterly meetings held for mentors by the program coordinator.

In 2001, the district negotiated the position of mentor program coordinator with the teachers association. The coordinator, while a full-time teacher, is given a stipend to coordinate the program, plan and deliver summer and quarterly training sessions, and assist in the development of the new teacher orientation.

Since the 1996-97 school year, Averill Park has provided training to and now has over 100 mentors. Each year, between 60 and 100 pre-tenured teachers have participated in the program. Over 200 teachers and teaching assistants have received tenure.

Teachers instructing together is an empowering strategy for instructional leadership. When working in pairs or small groups, teachers can draw upon their individual strengths to provide high quality learning experiences. In this type of setting, teachers get to observe each other constantly and share teaching suggestions, brainstorm, and solve teaching problems. Team teaching, however, is not easy.

Co-teaching and Team Teaching

Leadership Strategies

Teaching is traditionally a professional practice in which teachers work alone. Teachers with years of experience may be uncomfortable when beginning to work with another adult. Consequently, team teaching and co-teaching approaches are growing slowly. When planned appropriately and supported in their efforts, team teaching and co-teaching can offer significant improvements to instruction.

Team Teaching

One form of team teaching takes collaboration to the next level by placing students and a pair or more of teachers in the same large classroom. These team teaching situations make it easy to draw upon the strengths of each teacher in order to develop enhanced learning experiences for students. For example, a school might create a humanities block by combining traditional English language arts and social studies classes. Teachers from each of these disciplines form a team and work with students in a double block of class time. They lead students through a variety of literature, history, reading, writing, and reflection activities that make connections between language and history.

In another example, three teachers from the disciplines of mathematics, science, and technology could create a triple period, project-based curriculum to help students develop required math and science concepts through applied activities. In addition to formal joint teaching assignments, team teaching can also be ad hoc when teachers come together for a specific lesson. In this case, a math teacher in a health academy may bring in a health teacher for a lesson illustrating how math is applied in the real world of medical research. Even this ad hoc team teaching can become a common practice by school leaders who encourage it by recognizing creative ideas and providing procedures for other staff to cover classrooms when necessary.

Another team teaching structure organizes teachers from the core academic areas into a team to teach a group of students collectively. All teachers in the team share the same students. The commonality of teaching assignments brings teachers together to plan instruction and meet the needs of the students under their responsibility. Working in the team structure, staff members have opportunities to reflect on instructional practices that are most effective in raising student achievement. In some instances, team members may focus on improving their practice through peer observations and collaborative scoring. Action research frequently takes place among the team members. They explore, discuss, practice, and evaluate methods of improving teaching and learning.

Through the team teaching approach, individual members find support from one another and share accountability for the success of the students and the team. As a team, the members may be given responsibility to decide jointly what resources to purchase, and to plan student expectations, curricula, assessments, and professional development opportunities. They might even be given the responsibility of determining professional and student placements. Working together on these and other initiatives strengthens the collaboration of the team; a sense of interdependence motivates individual team members to assist and support others for the success of the team as a whole.

Team teaching is the exception to the way most teachers have taught and learned. It requires patience, which enables teachers to compromise and share responsibilities. However, the rewards are significant — teachers learn from one another and create better instruction. This form of staff collaboration, where the strengths of educators are combined, is important in improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Co-teaching

Co-teaching is another form of teachers working together that is applied to teaching between a general education teacher and a special education teacher in a general education classroom which includes students with disabilities. In this model, the general and special education teachers share instructional responsibility, resources, and accountability for all of the students assigned to the classroom. Together, the teachers plan, present, and evaluate instruction and student progress. They also share equally in creating a learning environment and building relationships with students.

Through the team teaching approach, individual members find support from one another and share accountability for the success of the students and the team.

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Components of Co-Teaching	
What Co-teaching Is	What Co-teaching Is Not
The general education teacher and special education teacher jointly plan and lead instruction. Both teachers teach content, modify instruction, and facilitate instructional activities.	One teacher leads instruction while the other teacher serves as an assistant in the class or outside the class, carrying out instructional support activities (e.g., facilitating instructional activities assigned by the teacher, copying, making materials, and grading papers).
Both teachers interact with all students in the same general education classroom at the same time.	The special education teacher separates students with disabilities from the rest of the class to work with them on a regular basis.
The general education teacher and the special education teacher jointly monitor, assess, and evaluate the progress of all students.	The general education teacher evaluates all students with some input from the special education teacher about the students with disabilities. Independently, the general education teacher evaluates the general education students and the special education teacher evaluates the students with disabilities.
Both teachers work together to resolve issues and provide supportive feedback to improve the teaching and learning environment for all students.	The general education teacher takes charge and makes all decisions, including what content will be taught and how it will be taught.

Adapted from Deiker and Murawski. "Co-teaching at the Secondary Level: Unique Issues, Current Trends and Suggestions for Success"

Co-teachers should never feel restricted to one particular co-teaching approach. Frequently, teachers can successfully adapt and implement a variety of co-teaching approaches to the same lesson. The six approaches that follow are examples of different ways to use co-teaching for the same English language arts lesson. In the lesson, students who are reading a selected novel together learn to identify character traits; describe character development, characters, and parts of a story; differentiate story facts and opinions; and relate facts from a story to their own lives and today's world.

Lead and Support. One teacher has primary responsibility for presenting the main lessons about character traits and development, describing characters and parts of a story, and identifying story facts versus opinion. The other teacher engages in instructional monitoring and such activities as checking for student understanding of the concepts being learned, identifying any problems students may be having with the content, providing specific feedback to individual students, and assigning students to cooperative groups for follow-up instructional strategies.

Station Teaching. One teacher plans for, leads, and monitors student progress at a station with activities about character traits and development, and describing characters. The other teacher plans, leads, and monitors student progress at a station with activities about parts of a story and differentiating between story facts and opinion. Students are divided into two heterogeneous groups and rotate between the stations.

Parallel Teaching. The teachers jointly plan the lessons about character traits and development, describing characters and parts of a story, and differentiating between story facts and opinion. They each deliver the content in the same way to one half of the class.

Complementary Teaching. One teacher provides the overall instruction about character traits and development, describing parts of a story and differentiating between story facts. The other teacher works with smaller groups of students who need reinforcement to pre-teach the next lesson or re-teach a previous lesson. Alternatively, this teacher might work with students who need enrichment to extend or supplement a lesson.

Team Teaching. Both teachers jointly plan and present lessons about character traits and development, describing characters and parts of a story and differentiating between story facts and opinion. Depending on

Co-teachers should never feel restricted to one particular co-teaching approach. Frequently, teachers can successfully adapt and implement a variety of co-teaching approaches to the same lesson.

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the instructional activities identified for each lesson, students can work individually, in pairs, or in heterogeneous cooperative learning groups to complete assignments. Both teachers work with all students on the assignments and monitor student progress.

Team Teaching/Follow up. Both teachers jointly plan and present lessons about character traits and development, describing characters and parts of a story and differentiating between story facts and opinion. Following each lesson, the class is divided into two groups that are based on different student needs for review and re-teaching, or enrichment. Each teacher works with one of the groups.

Regardless of the co-teaching approach used, teachers can successfully address all of the lesson objectives and meet the particular needs of the students. Once the novel is completed, co-teachers can implement one of the approaches in order to conduct a culminating instructional activity or assessment. For example, students can be divided into heterogeneous, cooperative groups to create a drawing/illustration, song, poem, rap, or skit to describe one of the story's characters. Student performance and progress can be monitored according to the co-teaching approach selected and grades can be assigned using a rubric provided to the students at the beginning of the assignment.

Tool for Co-Teaching and Team Teaching

This section has one tool for co-teaching.



Leadership for Co-Teaching

Pervasive	Considerable	Partial	Initiated	Absent	
Planning					
					Is there evidence of co-planning by the general and special educators?
					Is there evidence of shared responsibility between the general and special educators when implementing the co-teaching program?
					Do co-teachers provide instruction in a shared classroom or other physical space?
					Is the co-teaching program being delivered to a heterogeneous group of students, including those with and without disabilities?
					Is the class size reasonable, with an appropriate proportion of students with disabilities?
Staffing					
					Do teachers volunteer to implement co-teaching?
					Did teachers receive useful professional development prior to implementing a co-teaching program?
					Do teachers receive ongoing professional development while implementing a co-teaching program?
					Do teachers receive adequate administrative support while implementing a co-teaching program?
					Can teachers talk freely with an administrator about concerns with the co-teaching program?
					Do teachers have enough co-planning time with their co-teaching partner?
					Do co-teaching partners share planning for and delivery of instruction?
					Do co-teaching partners share planning for and implementing of class rules and procedures?

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Pervasive	Considerable	Partial	Initiated	Absent	
Curriculum					
					Is the general education curriculum used for all students in the program?
					Is there evidence of high achievement expectations for all students in the program?
					Are proper sequencing and pacing of curriculum content evident?
					Is there evidence that students' IEP goals, objectives, and accommodations are incorporated into the classroom curriculum and instruction?
					Do staff stay abreast of education research and emerging trends regarding the effective use of technology and encourage the evaluation of new technologies to improve student learning?
					Does the school have strategic partnerships to support the use of technology?
Instruction					
					Are a variety of instructional strategies being used to meet the varying needs of students?
					Are various instructional strategies used appropriately with specific content?
					Is there evidence that all students are included in some way in instructional activities?
					Are instructional strategies and interventions implemented with fidelity?
Parents					
					Are several methods used to inform parents about the use of a co-teaching model?
					Have parents' knowledge, perceptions, and satisfaction been assessed?
					Are both positive and negative evaluation data from the co-teaching program shared in an understandable way with parents?
					Are parents' questions and concerns regarding the co-teaching program addressed appropriately?
					Are student and family rights to privacy and confidentiality of records upheld?

7 Empowerment Practices

Pervasive	Considerable	Partial	Initiated	Absent	
Results					
					Have students exhibited gains in achievement/performance as a result of implementing a co-teaching model?
					Have students exhibited gains in social skills as a result of implementing a co-teaching model?
					Is there evidence of a positive classroom climate?
					Is there evidence of positive teacher-student relationships with the entire class as well as with individual students?
					Do teachers monitor group work effectively?
					Are there well-articulated classroom rules and procedures, including behavior limits, to enhance the learning of all students?
					Are teachers reinforcing classroom rules and procedures consistently for all students?
					Are teachers using positive behavior management strategies consistently as needed for individual students?
					Is a system for tracking student behavior efficiently and inconspicuously used?
					Do teachers consistently monitor student behavior in the classroom?
					Do teachers respond to inappropriate behavior quickly and appropriately?

Adapted from *Strategies for High School Students with Disabilities in the General Education Curriculum*, published by the International Center for Leadership in Education.

Everyone likes to be recognized and/or receive some type of reward for work well done. Educators are no exception. Rewards, recognition, and incentives motivate teachers to continue to improve and take pride in their school and work. Rewards work best when they are known in advance, with the criteria for receiving them clearly defined. It is valuable to recognize an instructional success, the attainment of a degree, the completion of a professional development activity, or the development of a curriculum or curricular map. In general, try to recognize results in student success rather than simply effort, but both are acceptable at times.

Leadership Strategies

As with students, teachers respond positively to recognition and are motivated to continue to develop activities and initiatives that improve teaching and learning. Typical incentives for educators are financial honorariums, time allotted during the school day to engage in the development of various initiatives, and the opportunity to assume a leadership capacity. Just as schools have the “student of the month,” some schools have the “teacher/employee of the month.” A teacher might be awarded a temporary, special parking place near the building for a school contribution. Including teacher accomplishments in the school newsletter to parents or in the student newspaper also provide teachers with recognition.

Summer scholarships for additional study in the teacher’s discipline or area of expertise are an excellent incentive for some educators. Candidates for this type of an incentive usually have to apply and indicate why they deserve this award. Another type of summer program is an internship in a local business organization. Again, application is usually required.

Recognition as an entire school staff helps to improve a sense of community. One exemplary activity that fits this category is the teacher appreciation luncheon in Barron County, Ky. The luncheon is held during one of the district professional development days and is funded and hosted by community groups to show appreciation for teachers. In addition to a great meal, each table is decorated by a local business with small gifts from that business for the teacher. Examples include perfume,

Teacher Incentives and Rewards

Rewards, recognition, and incentives motivate teachers to continue to improve and take pride in their school and work.

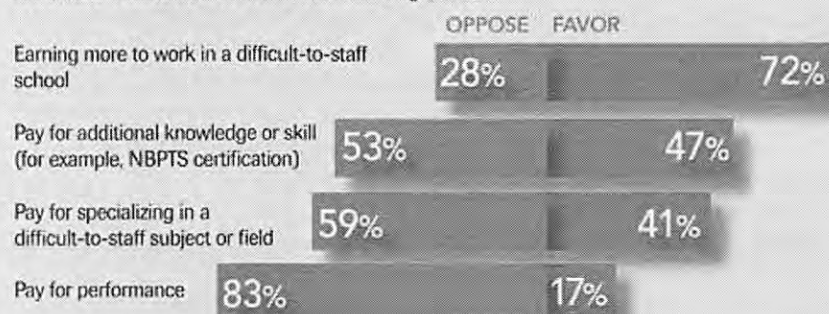
t-shirts, and movie tickets. These are small gestures, but they are very powerful in building a cohesive school community.

One of the national programs that contribute a great deal to teachers showing positive instructional practice is the National Board Certification program. Teachers completing the certification comment that the process is challenging, but it caused them to reflect considerably on their practice. Many states and districts provide financial stipends or increased salaries for the completion of national certification. Beyond financial incentives, schools can also provide personal recognition with public ceremonies and acknowledgement at school events. For example, A.B. Combs Elementary School in Raleigh, N.C., maintains a Wall of Honor in the entrance to the school with the pictures of all current teachers that are board certified.

Recognition is meaningful if it comes from peers, but recognition from students is even more powerful. At Kennesaw Mountain High School in Kennesaw, Ga., the focus is on constantly striving for high rigor and high relevance — Quadrant D learning. Students are very much a part of the effort to raise the level of learning. The student leadership group at Kennesaw gives a monthly award to a teacher who has taught the most outstanding Quadrant D lesson.

Recognition is meaningful if it comes from peers, but recognition from students is even more powerful.

Teachers' Attitudes Toward Various Pay Plans



SOURCE: Daniel Goldhaber, Michael DeArmond, and Scott DeBurgomaster, *Performance Incentives: Their Growing Impact on American K-12 Education*

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Be careful what you reward. If all of the recognition is placed on individual teacher rewards, this may be counterproductive if one of the school goals is increased collaboration. If teachers working together is a priority, seek recognition that rewards groups of teachers, rather than individual teachers.

The most controversial reward is teacher pay for performance. The idea of pay for performance for public school teachers is growing in popularity as it has resurged once again; however, there are strong opinions pro and con. *Performance Incentives: Their Growing Impact on American K-12 Education* offers the most up-to-date and complete analysis of this promising — yet still controversial — policy innovation. Schools and districts will continue to explore the role financial incentives can play in public education.

Whatever the prize, the teacher will respond to this form of recognition and support. With teacher recognition, the value and esteem of the profession is affirmed, and indirect gratitude is expressed for the contributions of the individual educator.

The majority (71%) of Generation Y teachers (born between the late 1970s and the late 1980s) are open to incentive pay, but only 10% rate standardized testing as an “excellent” measure of student success, according to the report, *Supporting Teacher Talent: The View From Generation Y*. Despite openness to incentive pay, young educators say it’s not their first choice as a strategy for improving teaching. The idea of tying teacher rewards to student performance ranked last among 12 proposals, including requiring new teachers to spend more time teaching in classrooms under the supervision of experienced teachers, requiring teachers to pass tough tests of their knowledge of the subjects they are teaching, and ensuring that the latest technology is available in each classroom to aid instruction.

This report, by Public Agenda and Learning Point Associates, is based on six focus group interviews conducted throughout the country and a national random-sample survey of 890 public school teachers conducted in the spring and summer of 2009 that included an oversample of 241 teachers aged 32 and under. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Joyce Foundation supported the work.

Goldhaber, D., Michael
DeArmond, M., and
DeBurgomaster, S.
*Performance Incentives:
Their Growing Impact
on American K-12
Education*

[www.publicagenda.org/
pages/teaching-for-a-living](http://www.publicagenda.org/pages/teaching-for-a-living)

Oversampling implies
the deliberate sampling
of a much higher
proportion of a certain
type than of the rest of
the population.



Tool for Teacher Incentives and Rewards

Ways to Recognize Teachers

- ▶ Ask parents to donate theater or sports tickets that they cannot use. Hold a random drawing for those tickets.
- ▶ At each faculty meeting, hold a random drawing for a "Lunch of the Month." Winning teachers get to order in from the restaurant-of-choice's menu.
- ▶ At each faculty meeting, hold a lottery drawing for a "free" two-hour break during which time the principal will cover a teacher's class.
- ▶ At the end of each grading period, send special notes of appreciation.
- ▶ Call for a "Dress Down Day." All teachers can dress down on that day.
- ▶ Cover a teacher's class so that he or she can attend to a family issue or see his or her own child perform at another school's concert.
- ▶ Each month, hold a party to recognize staff members who will celebrate birthdays that month.
- ▶ Encourage individuals or teams of teachers to present at conferences.
- ▶ Establish a bulletin board to spotlight a different teacher(s) each month.
- ▶ Extend personal compliments as you do classroom walk-throughs.
- ▶ Give gift certificates to teachers who have perfect attendance each quarter.
- ▶ Give professional books to teachers as recognition.
- ▶ Host a "Thank-you Breakfast" during Teacher Appreciation Week.
- ▶ Include a joke or two in each e-newsletter.
- ▶ Meet outside of school over lunch with teachers of each grade level or with teaching teams.
- ▶ Offer a sweet reward — a candy bar or an ice-cream cone coupon — for teachers who complete surveys before the deadline.
- ▶ Plan a "pampering day" with massages or manicures. Arrange to have each teacher's class covered for 30 minutes so that they can visit the pampering room.



Ways to Recognize Teachers, continued

- ▶ Plan to take over a class for a special read-aloud time that will give teachers an extra break.
- ▶ Provide a duty-free week during scheduled state test times. Arrange to have PTA parents or others cover those duties.
- ▶ Provide copying services for teachers.
- ▶ Provide dinner between school and an evening parent meeting.
- ▶ Provide doughnuts in the morning — for no special reason other than to say, "thank you."
- ▶ Provide each teacher with a coffee mug that has his or her name on it.
- ▶ Purchase a special book for the school library to recognize a teacher or honor a special occasion.
- ▶ Purchase fresh flowers for teachers' desks during parent-teacher conference week.
- ▶ Put "cookie coupons" in teachers' mailboxes. Arrange with the cafeteria for teachers to redeem those coupons for a special treat!
- ▶ Recognize a teacher who has gone above and beyond by putting in his/her mailbox a voucher for a free cup of coffee at a local coffee shop.
- ▶ Relieve a teacher's duty as a reward for a special contribution.
- ▶ Send a complimentary e-mail and put a copy in the teacher's file.
- ▶ Send a personal, handwritten note of thanks or appreciation to teachers "caught" caring or who pulled off terrific classroom projects.
- ▶ Start an "encouraging words" chain in which teachers drop "encouraging words cards" in their colleagues' mailboxes.
- ▶ Take a teacher out to lunch to recognize a special day — for example, a birthday or a special honor or award.
- ▶ The faculty room is not getting the attention it needs? Arrange for "gremlins" to clean it up!

Teacher Observations and Study Tours

One of the most meaningful ways in which teachers can improve instruction is by watching other teachers.

Teachers can read research and participate in professional development about how to improve instruction. However, there is nothing quite as powerful as actually seeing good instructional practice. One of the most meaningful ways in which teachers can improve instruction is by watching other teachers. This process most often takes two forms in schools. First, when teachers have an opportunity to observe other teachers, they have specific examples to compare to their practice; for example, teachers might observe exemplary teachers to glean best practices. Teachers may also observe their peers at a particular grade level or subject to reinforce teaching practices and reflect on their own instruction.

A second form of observation is site visits to other schools. It is wonderful to hear the story of success from a presentation at a Model Schools Conference. But, it is much more powerful to actually sit in the classrooms of a model school. Listening to students, observing instruction, and sensing the culture are the best ways to get to know the school. Large numbers of teachers don't have opportunities to conduct a site visit or study tour. However, it is a highly relevant way to share best practices. One of the activities and services that the International Center provides is arranging study tours to model schools.

Leadership Strategies

Teacher observation is a common practice in preparing teachers. Student teachers have significant opportunities to observe instruction and work directly with the supervising teacher to observe his or her practice. However, teacher observation should be used extensively when teachers are employed as regular teachers with the expectation and opportunity for teachers to learn from one another. Teachers should not limit observations to teachers at their own grade level or in their own subject — teachers can learn from those who teach *outside* of their grade and subject area. For example, observations of routines in a technical music class can be applied to academics. Observing coaches work with athletes provides insight into building relationships with students and individualized instruction. Teachers can also learn from teachers who may not be exemplary teachers and have less than perfect practice. Devoting time to observations can be a powerful form of professional development.

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One of the ways administrators can support teacher observations is by setting up procedures for classroom coverage. Some schools use floating substitutes on a regular basis to cover classes in order for teachers to make observations of other classrooms. Non-instructional staff can also be used for classroom coverage in order to take advantage of observation activities.

Identifying model classrooms is another strategy for increasing teacher observations. Teachers can apply to showcase specific practices in their classes. Since some teachers will be reluctant to showcase, extending personal invitations to do so is important. In one school, the instructional coaches actually published a calendar of observation opportunities during each month. They identified outstanding teachers and the times when they would be conducting an exemplary lesson that would be ideal observation opportunities.

In one elementary school, two teachers were very innovative in differentiating instruction. The principal and district staff development leader tried to entice the two teachers into becoming instructional coaches. The teachers were reluctant because they enjoyed teaching so much and did not want to leave the classroom. The principal devised a creative solution to pair the teachers in a single class, and their classroom actually became the demonstration classroom. Both teachers were still working with students, but there was an extra person to work with the small groups of teachers from that school and across the district that came to observe and learn in the demonstration classroom. The professional learning was more powerful because other teachers could directly observe the practice.

One of the tools included for classroom observation is the Classroom Observation Protocols. This comprehensive list should only be undertaken in a robust, well-developed, classroom observation scheme. As schools begin to build classroom observations, it is important to start small to help teachers become comfortable with making observations. First begin with simple, less subjective measures such as looking at student work at the beginning of a class period or setting up clear objectives for the day. Over time, as teachers become more comfortable with observations, they can move into observing specific strategies and more subjective observations of teaching and learning.

When administrators set an expectation for frequent observation, it begins to break the culture that teaching is a less of a private act and more of a public act in which all are constantly sharing good ideas.

Tools for Teacher Observations and Study Tours

Tools to assist with observations and study tours follow.

- Classroom Observation Form
- Study Tour Protocols



Classroom Observation Form

Guide your observations according to the prompts in the following seven areas.

Class _____

Teacher(s) _____

Date _____

Observation Questions	Notes
1. Clear learning objectives	
▶ Do students understand the objectives for the class?	
▶ Are the objectives linked to standards?	
▶ Does student learning relate to the objectives?	
2. Evidence of building relationships	
▶ Are students AND teachers interested and enthusiastic?	
▶ Does the teacher use student names?	
▶ Is humor used appropriately?	
▶ Does the teacher ever embarrass or belittle students in any way?	
▶ Is the atmosphere in the classroom participative?	
▶ Does the teacher make eye contact with the students?	

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Observation Questions	Notes
3. Use of time	
▶ Does instruction begin at the start of the class and continue until the end of the period?	
▶ Does the timing of classroom activities consider attention spans?	
▶ Is the pace of the lesson appropriate for the needs of the students?	
▶ Do students follow routines to use time effectively?	
4. Preparation	
▶ Are students prepared — for reading or other assignments?	
▶ Is the teacher well prepared?	
5. Instructional strategies	
▶ Do strategies develop rigor in student thinking and reflection?	
▶ Do strategies provide students with the opportunity to do real-world work?	
▶ Does the teacher use a variety of strategies?	
▶ Does the teacher use questioning strategies effectively?	
▶ Is the use of technology effective?	
▶ Is the teacher paying attention to cues of boredom and confusion?	

Observation Questions	Notes
6. Student participation	
▶ Is active student participation encouraged and valued?	
▶ Do students verbalize extended responses, rather than simple answers?	
▶ Are students intellectually engaged with important ideas relevant to the lesson?	
▶ Are there examples of intellectual rigor and constructive criticism?	
▶ Are students encouraged to generate ideas, questions, conjectures, and propositions?	
7. Personalization of instruction	
▶ Are the emotional, physical, and intellectual needs of the students met?	
▶ Is the delivery paced to student needs?	
▶ Does the teacher prompt awareness of students' prior learning and experiences?	
▶ Does the teacher relate class goals to students' personal goals or societal concerns?	
▶ Is there a climate of respect for students' experiences, ideas, and contributions?	
▶ Do students demonstrate a willingness to share ideas and take intellectual risks?	
▶ Do students feel comfortable in asking for help when needed?	
Good Classroom Practices:	



Study Tour Protocols

Study tours are an excellent forum for teachers to exchange ideas and share experiences. These experiences are most valuable when participants from each school spend some time in advance preparing for the visit.

Visiting School Team

Preparation

- Agree on an instructional focus for the school visit study tour.
- Select the members of the visiting team; 6-10 is an ideal range.
- Communicate with the study tour school to ensure that the practices at the school satisfy your instructional focus.
- Make logistical arrangements for travel, lodging, and school meeting times.

During Visit

- Meet with the school leaders to establish the expectations for your visit and to gain an overview of the school's best practices.
- Make assignments among the team as to the activities of the visit; try to make visits in pairs.
- Observe students arriving at school and passing between classes and lunchtime.
- Talk with focus groups of students from various grade levels to determine their perceptions of school.
- Talk with focus groups of staff from various subjects to gather both broad perspectives on school improvement and indepth advice on specific practices.
- Talk with focus groups of stakeholders (e.g., parents and business partners).
- Make classroom observations in walk-throughs of 5-10 minutes.
- Make more extensive classroom observations appropriate for specific instructional areas of interest.
- Arrange for specialized meetings with special non-instructional staff that relate to your focus (e.g., counselors, special education teachers, and ELL teachers).

After Observations

- Meet with the team at the end of the day to reflect on observations.
- Send a personal thank-you to the school for the study tour.
- Prepare for presentation to the staff at the home school regarding the results of the study tour.

Study Tour School

Preparation

- Determine the visiting team's focus for its visit.
- Select the date and time for the visit. Possibly schedule the study tour at the time it will be possible to observe a leadership team meeting or a meeting with stakeholders.
- Inform all appropriate staff about the study tour and its purpose.
- Schedule special conversations with specific staff that may be of interest to the visiting team (e.g., counselors, special education teachers, and ELL teachers).
- Select students and schedule student focus groups.
- Schedule available teachers for focus group discussions.
- Develop a general itinerary for the day that is shared with the visiting team.

During Study Tour Visit

- Welcome the visiting team and provide an overview of the school and descriptions of best practices related to the purpose of the study visit.
- Provide a master schedule of the school day.
- Provide a school map.
- Provide descriptive information on the school, such as vision, mission, curriculum, and school improvement plans.
- Provide student achievement data and demographics.
- Meet at the end of the day with representatives from your leadership team and study tour team to answer any questions about observations during the day.

Case Study of Truman High School

Truman High School, in Independence, Mo., is an example of a high school that used classroom observations extensively in its instructional improvement efforts.

Truman High School is a comprehensive, grades 9-12 high school serving the suburban, primarily blue-collar community. Truman serves approximately 1,600 students; 21% are minorities, 30% are eligible for free/reduced lunch, and 7% are students with disabilities. The four-year graduation rate has risen steadily over the past few years and now stands at 89%. The school is in the fourth year of reorganization into five smaller learning communities, or houses, each containing approximately 350 students in grades 9-12, 20 interdisciplinary teachers, a lead teacher, an assistant principal, and one counselor. The houses are balanced with respect to gender, academic ability, and other relevant factors, and generally are situated in a specific wing or section of the school, although the assistant principal's office is in the main office complex. The house provides a unique identity and autonomy for staff and students alike.

While there was nothing "broken" in the Independence School District, a commitment to ensure that each learner will achieve the skills and self-confidence to be successful in an ever-changing world was the rationale and impetus for a task force to study the state of high school education in the district. The High School Task Force was formed in fall 2004, and was made up of parents, community leaders, teachers, and administrators. Three subcommittees studied specific areas: collaboration and professional learning communities; personalization of the school environment for students; and curriculum, instruction, and assessment. This group of 50 met 18 times over six months to identify the current level of services and supports for students, the desired level of services, and a plan for improvement. Suggestions came in the form of 24 recommendations for high school redesign and were approved by the School Board in June 2005.

Four of the 10 recommendations related to collaboration and PLCs are worthy of highlighting:

- The principal will provide leadership with vision, direction, and focus. This will include a strong mission/vision statement; consistent

reminders of direction; high expectations of staff, students, and self; and a system of accountability for all.

- Members of the staff will collaborate as a school community to develop and implement the school's learning goals. This will include providing time for discussions and planning, creating sacred time for focusing on curriculum and instruction, and developing common planning times.
- Every school will promote the use of personal learning plans for each educator. Teachers will be given leadership roles in planning and/or developing professional development. Feedback from peers, administrators, and students regarding ways to improve instruction and learning in the classroom will be gathered.
- The school will promote policies and practices that recognize diversity and will offer ongoing professional development to help educators appreciate issues of diversity and expose students to a rich array of viewpoints, perspectives, and experiences.

Since June 2005, Truman has worked to address the 24 recommendations through the careful and purposeful implementation of programs, initiatives, and supporting professional development. A high school redesign coordinator works closely with the administration in overseeing and implementing the redesign efforts. Never prone to jump on bandwagons or packaged programs, "Trumanizing" is a way of life as the school researches, reflects, adapts, and implements best programs and practices that benefit students.

One of the significant structural changes resulting from the Task Force recommendations was the redesign of each of the two larger high schools into five small learning communities, called "houses." Even more significant was the fact that the houses were given much autonomy in implementing the general goals of rigor, relevance, and relationships for their students. House leaders have provided instruction in the Rigor/Relevance Framework, and much discussion has taken place about how to define, recognize, and measure rigor, relevance, and relationships. The houses have implemented their own plans for providing extra help, the Power of Incomplete policy, pre- and post-lesson protocols, literacy and numeracy, and student engagement. Every teacher at Truman has a copy of the International Center's *Instructional Strategies — Teacher*

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Handbook and is working with his or her house in choosing, researching, sharing, and implementing a particular strategy.

To support the instructional strategy initiative, teachers at Truman can apply to be a demonstration model classroom. The focus is on strategy and not just about one “magic” lesson. The 2009-10 school year is the second year for model classrooms at Truman. Departments were charged with picking one student-centered instructional strategy from their handbook to study and implement throughout the year. This list was published and each department in May 2008 delivered an instructional strategies workshop. Each presentation had the following elements:

- explanation of the instructional strategy
- process of study
- specific examples of successes and challenges in implementation
- instructional strategy demonstration

In fall 2008, departments were required to continue study in their instructional strategy or choose another strategy. Teachers were also encouraged to apply to be a model classroom in a student-centered instructional strategy. The process to become a model classroom was as follows:

- Fill out an application form.
- Choose a date to be observed using the instructional strategy.
- Use the instructional strategy checklist from the International Center's *Instructional Strategies — Teacher Handbook*.
- Meet with observers and select model classrooms for the year.
- Distribute \$500 to selected teachers for classroom materials and supplies.

Once model classroom teachers were selected, each teacher became responsible for putting together an information sheet on his or her instructional strategy for teachers, as well as submitting multiple dates per month to see the strategy in action. Each year, new teachers to the building are required to select a model classroom to visit as well as all teachers from departments whose instructional strategy focus is represented by the model classroom.

Model classrooms are currently in the following areas: Socratic seminar, project-based learning, cooperative learning, and co-teaching (regular and special education teachers) strategies.

Classroom observations, called “learning walks” at Truman, are another relatively new initiative. Twice a year — once within the house and once outside — all teachers visit other classrooms to observe progress on designated school objectives. For instance, the first walk in 2009-10 focused on using bell ringers, displaying the objectives of the lesson, and observing two great things. Over two days, all of these brief visits were completed, and data was compiled, shared, and discussed with the staff. The second walk concentrated on objectives, student-centered versus teacher-centered instruction, instructional strategies, and two great things to share.

Each spring, Truman trains a team of its own teachers, and teachers and administrators from feeder middle schools in the Data-in-a-Day program. Data-in-a-Day is comprised of numerous classroom observations as well as student interviews, all of which take place in a single school day. Classroom observations and interview questions focus on three or four issues which are determined by the Building Leadership Team and are based on an analysis of data received throughout the current year from various systems of accountability embedded in existing programs.

The Data-in-a-Day team gives the results of the observations and interviews to the faculty the next day. A PowerPoint presentation highlights successes and challenges, and offers suggestions for improvement. All of the highlighted areas are backed up with data from observations and interviews. A report is then prepared for the Building Leadership Team, which uses the results to create the Building Improvement Plan for the subsequent school year. The cost of the Data-in-a-Day program is limited to substitute teachers, basic supplies, and lunch. The program also requires a building leader to plan and implement it. The results have been extremely effective in supporting a culture of continuous improvement at Truman. Benefits include, but are not limited to:

- modeling and sustaining a culture of continuous improvement through purposeful assessment of initiatives and programs
- using data to determine needs and actions through assessing the alignment of school improvement initiatives and programs, teacher actions, and student outcomes
- accelerating school improvement by promoting self-reflection and evaluation, and celebrating progress made on initiatives and programs

The most effective professional development relates directly to an individual teacher's situation and needs. One of the best ways to extend teacher learning related to instruction is to encourage and support teachers to continue to improve their practice through professional development.

Leadership Strategies

Professional development is best when it is individualized and teachers have some choice. Studies have shown that while most teachers work alone, they desire more collaboration with their peers. Research has also shown that schools are more effective when teachers have opportunities for observing their peers, helping one another, and participating in plans for school improvement. Teachers are more likely to make changes in their teaching if they see their peers attempting similar changes and have opportunities to discuss ideas, challenges, and implementation. While leaders may create structures for individualized professional learning, it may be more effective to have teachers pair with a mentor or a peer with similar interests. Pairing gives teachers a partner to discuss ideas and plans, and also puts teachers in the situation of being accountable to a partner; therefore, they may be more likely to be responsible in completing professional development activities in a timely manner.

Just as students learn better when they are able to construct knowledge by linking new experiences to previous ones, teachers need to learn through discovery and constructing knowledge. Professional development should involve a balance of training, content learning, and collegial support. There are times when training in a new technique or technology is essential. However, professional development designed as training has limited transfer and implementation possibilities. Using individual professional development to supplement training around an instructional improvement focus, such as differentiation or technology, can be a great extension of a schoolwide professional development plan.

A subject matter approach may be appropriate for initial teacher preparation, but convincing practicing teachers that they need more content knowledge is challenging. With a greater emphasis in teaching strategies, such as inquiry or discovery learning, teachers need deeper knowledge of content compared to direct instruction that closely follows

Individualized Professional Learning

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a textbook. While there is often additional content that teachers need to learn, professional development must emphasize an ongoing structure of collegial support if any change is to occur. Again, having partners can make teachers more accountable in developing their content knowledge. Also having teachers serve as content experts for their peers can spur them to become more knowledgeable in new content knowledge that expands their teaching.

The most valuable professional development and the greatest source of new ideas come from activities designed and controlled by teachers as individuals.

The most valuable professional development and the greatest source of new ideas come from activities designed and controlled by teachers as individuals. The process for achieving improvement is driven by teachers who develop their own personal improvement plans. Professional development is a continuous process for all teachers. It is not the daylong workshop that frequently has little to do with daily classroom challenges, but rather the learning that teachers engage in to become better in their profession. Teachers must assume the responsibility for continuous professional development and put themselves in the position of learning constantly from reflection, innovation, collaboration, reading, and observing.

The recent growth of online professional development creates many new and flexible options for individualized professional learning. Before the use of the Internet for professional learning, teachers had to go where the expert was and meet at a convenient time. Online learning eliminates many of the barriers of location and time, making online professional learning convenient. While online learning lacks the personal interaction component, it is a rapidly growing option because of its convenience. Online learning takes one of three primary forms:

- instructor led and graduate level, credit-bearing courses
- online programs from commercial and not-for-profit organizations
- online content

Instructor-led graduate level courses are popular and taken by many teachers to fulfill certification requirements or earn graduate degrees. Teachers might take individual courses or several courses as part of a graduate degree. There are a few entirely online graduate programs.

Online programs from commercial and not-for-profit organizations provide excellent resources for professional learning. These are often provided by

schools and made available to teachers as a professional development resource. There is usually a fee for these programs that is either paid for by the school or by individual teachers. Schools that purchase these programs provide rich resources for staff. Many of these schools have university partners that allow teachers to pay an additional tuition in order to receive graduate credit. Some of the popular national online programs include PD 360 from School Improvement Network, Educational Impact, Teachscape, Performance Learning Systems, and Knowledge Delivery Systems. Several not-for-profit organizations options, such as PBS TeacherLine and those developed in various states and teacher associations, are also available.

Online content is not in the form of a professional development course, with objectives, scripted lessons, and assessments. Rather, teachers gain substantial knowledge from content that resides on the Internet. Teachers can find everything from open-source university courses, video libraries depicting complex content and models lessons, and online pedagogy. This rich content far exceeds any content a school can bring into a school in the form of a professional development program. The challenge is that it is much harder to quantify this type of open-ended professional learning. How do you give credit for it? How do you know teachers have completed sessions? These are difficult questions that are not easily handled in traditional systems for quantifying and documenting professional learning. However, when these valuable online resources are coupled with structured, school-based, professional learning and conversations, they can lead to excellent professional learning.

Tools for Individualized Professional Learning

There are multiple ways to accomplish continuous professional development. Professional development should be selected based on an individualized goal and plan. The following tools offer several examples of individual professional development strategies and a plan format for teachers to use as part of individualized professional learning.

- Individualized Professional Development Strategies
- Personal Growth Plan



Individualized Professional Development Strategies

Self-directed Options

- ▶ viewing videos of new content or pedagogy
- ▶ visiting another school/workplace
- ▶ observing a colleague's work
- ▶ interviewing colleagues about their work styles and practices
- ▶ learning a new skill from a colleague
- ▶ writing reflectively
- ▶ taking online training programs
- ▶ piloting a program
- ▶ reading professionally
- ▶ applying for and holding a new position

Collaborative Options

- ▶ establishing a buddy relationship
- ▶ teaching a skill to a colleague
- ▶ identifying and using the expertise of a colleague
- ▶ giving or seeking feedback
- ▶ working in a team to develop programs
- ▶ conducting an action research project
- ▶ team teaching
- ▶ doing a teacher exchange
- ▶ holding informal discussions with colleagues
- ▶ reviewing or planning online lessons collaboratively

Continuing Education Options

- ▶ enrolling in short courses or training programs
- ▶ participating in seminar programs
- ▶ taking graduate courses
- ▶ giving a presentation to colleagues on a work project
- ▶ teaching courses or giving workshops
- ▶ mentoring or shadowing a program
- ▶ participating in a formal network



Personal Growth Plan

The following reflective questions will guide you through the key aspects of developing a personal professional development plan.

Student Achievement

Goals — What will students achieve differently as a result of your professional development?

Documentation — What sources of data will you use to measure student achievement goals?

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student Performance Test | <input type="checkbox"/> Student Portfolio | <input type="checkbox"/> State Test |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local Test | <input type="checkbox"/> AP Test | <input type="checkbox"/> Student Projects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student Interview | <input type="checkbox"/> Job/College Placement | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
-

Personal Needs Assessment

Source — What sources of information will you use to identify needs to be addressed in this plan?

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personal Observation | <input type="checkbox"/> Student Performance | <input type="checkbox"/> Student Achievement Data |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student Feedback | <input type="checkbox"/> Administrator Observation | <input type="checkbox"/> Peer Observation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Self-reflection | <input type="checkbox"/> New Responsibility | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
-

Type — On what type of knowledge or skill will this plan focus?

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Classroom Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Content Knowledge | <input type="checkbox"/> Instructional Strategies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Development of Assessments | <input type="checkbox"/> More Rigor/Relevance | <input type="checkbox"/> Use of Technology |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School Safety | <input type="checkbox"/> Analyzing Student Data | <input type="checkbox"/> Standards |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Character Education | <input type="checkbox"/> School to Career | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
-

Description — What aspects of teaching and learning do you wish to improve?

Professional Development Goals

Goals — What are your goals for professional development? Be specific. Include timeline.

Professional Development Activities

Methods — Which methods will you use to achieve professional development?

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Workshop | <input type="checkbox"/> University Course | <input type="checkbox"/> Distance Learning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Self Study | <input type="checkbox"/> Study Group | <input type="checkbox"/> Experimentation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Action Research | <input type="checkbox"/> Partnership | <input type="checkbox"/> Immersion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coaching/Mentoring | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | |

Activities — What professional development activities will you complete? Include timeline.

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To Be Completed after Professional Development

Professional Development Reflection

Activities — What did you personally accomplish in your professional development?

Evaluation — What are the positive impacts of this professional development?

What would you do differently?

Follow-up — What changes will you make in instruction? What are the expected changes in student learning?



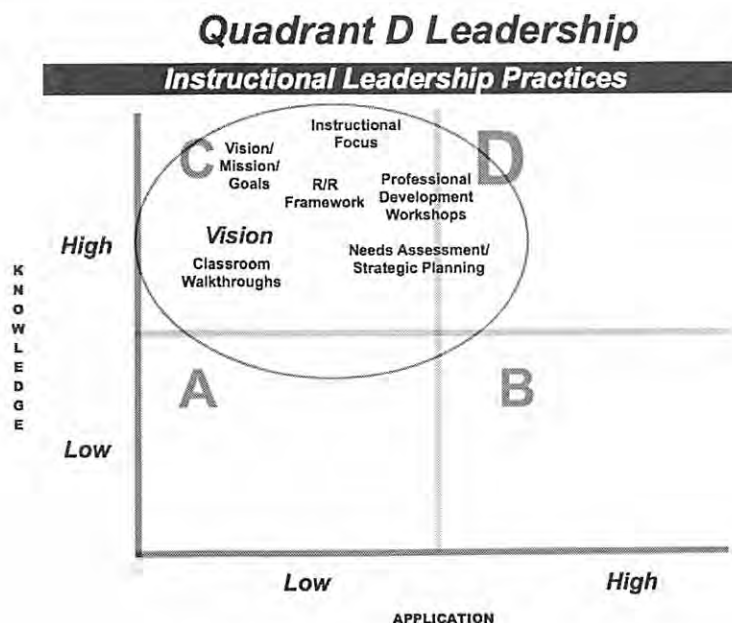
Chapter 8

Vision Practices

Quadrant C is home to vision practices. These practices may reflect high levels of knowledge of leadership and creativity, but they are weaker in their focus on empowerment. A leader who is operating in Quadrant C may be a strong visionary and may create helpful professional opportunities for staff development to support instruction, but this leader has a harder time letting others develop leadership skills to create solidity across the organization. When a Quadrant C leader leaves an organization, it may be difficult for his or her good work to continue — even if it is well-defined — because so much of the progress was tied to the individual strengths of the outgoing leader.

Vision Practices

- Vision, Mission, and Goals
- Instructional Technology
- Rigor/Relevance Framework
- Needs Assessment and Strategic Planning
- Classroom Walk-throughs
- Professional Development Workshops



Sometimes a school has fallen into an apathetic routine. Everyone does their job, but with little enthusiasm and commitment. This may be a time for the individual leader to initiate a new vision, mission, or goals. By envisioning, others come to believe that things can be different in the school. Through the vision of a leadership team or leader, a school staff can imagine what it would be like to have problems solved, processes run more smoothly, and/or outcomes be more successful.

Leadership Strategies

The strategy of vision may be referred to as vision, mission, goals, or core values. When working on vision, leaders may also be focusing on one or more of the other three components. Is there a need for all four components? Not necessarily. Leaders should reflect on the needs of the organization. If there is considerable confusion or if the school is new, it is essential to spend time on all four components. In other situations, it may be more efficient to address only one or two aspects of the vision.

This diagram shows the relationship among the four components. Vision, mission, and goals set the direction for an organization; all relate to one another and build on one another. Vision is the highest level and takes the broadest view of the organization. Mission is the next level and becomes more specific and focused on the organization. Goals are the lowest level because they are more closely linked to the operation of the organization.



Core values are the fundamental principles that everyone in the organization believes in. They stand alone and influence the entire process. Examples of core value statements include:

- Value self, others, property, and diversity.
- Treat people equally and make decisions without favoritism or prejudice.

Vision, Mission, and Goals

Through the vision of a leadership team or leader, a school staff can imagine what it would be like to have problems solved, processes run more smoothly, and/or outcomes be more successful.

Without a stated set of core values, each person looks at the organization a little differently, influenced by his or her personal set of beliefs.

Vision defines the where the organization is going. *Mission* defines how to get there.

- Be accountable for your actions toward yourself, others, and the community.
- Involve parents as essential partners in effective student learning.

By having a set of core values and stating these, leadership groups and organizations create a common set of assumptions and beliefs that guide the development of the vision, mission, and goals.

Vision and mission are frequently confused. What is the difference between a vision statement and a mission statement? *Vision* defines the where the organization is going. *Mission* defines how to get there. A vision statement describes a *desired state*, while a mission statement describes *the action and purpose* of the vision. Vision should determine a school's mission. The vision is a bigger picture and future-oriented, while the mission is more focused on the immediate present. The vision defines the end game and the mission provides the roadmap that will take one there. Vision statements are most often written about students and student learning. Mission statements are most often written about school staff and work the school will do. Are both vision and mission necessary? No, but it is helpful to have both.

A vision statement, as implied in the construction of the term itself, puts forth a statement of the envisioned future. A nonexistent, ambiguous, or weak school vision is a recipe for ambivalence and poor student achievement. It would be akin to the proverbial ship without a rudder, adrift without any direction or control.

Sample Vision Statements

A vision statement is what the organization wants to become. It describes how the future will look if the school achieves its mission. A vision statement describes a picture of the "preferred future," such as the following examples of vision statements reflect:

- To provide a stimulating learning environment with a technological orientation across the whole curriculum, which maximizes individual potential and ensures students of all ability levels are well equipped to meet the challenges of education, work, and life.

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- Students will:
 - develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes to be productive and responsible citizens
 - become proficient in academic core areas in accordance with district and state standards, emphasizing literacy, numeracy, technology, and civility
 - develop essential life skills to become self-directed and lifelong learners
 - conduct themselves in a way that contributes to a safe and orderly atmosphere and that ensures the rights of others
 - broaden perspectives in order to respect and appreciate diverse cultures within their school as well as within their community
- We will have a welcoming environment where students can experience academic success and prepare for postsecondary education, the world of work, and life's challenges. Students will receive the messages, "You are important. You can do it. I will not give up on you."
- X Elementary School strives for excellence in academic achievement through a quality education by providing a positive, safe, challenging environment, with opportunities for all leading to high expectations, accountability, and responsibility.
- At X High School, students, staff, parents, and our community partners understand what it takes to foster successful lifelong learning. All school community members have a voice and work together toward the development of the whole child, preserving his/her uniqueness while preparing them to be a productive, contributing member of our diverse society.

Sample Mission Statements

A mission statement concerns what an organization is all about. It gives the overall purpose of an organization. A mission statement explains what the organization does, for whom, and the benefit to others, such as the following examples of vision statements reflect:

Sample mission statements include:

- To promote active learning, self-worth, and a shared sense of responsibility.
- To provide a caring, stable environment and academic excellence, while preparing its pupils for lifelong learning.
- The X Middle School exists to serve the unique academic, physical, social, and emotional needs of students who are in a special and critical period of their lives as they change from childhood to adolescence. The staff of X Middle School is committed to creating and maintaining an orderly, trusting, and caring environment, where teaching and learning are exciting and students are assisted as they develop responsibility. All aspects of the school's organization, curricular, and co-curricular activities are child-centered and designed to accommodate individual learning styles so that all may experience success.
- The mission of X Middle School is to provide each student with a diverse education in a safe, supportive environment that promotes self-discipline, motivation, and excellence in learning. The X team joins the parents and community to assist the students in developing skills to become independent and self-sufficient adults who will succeed and contribute responsibly in a global community.
- To provide our students success in learning. We are dedicated to the individual development of attitudes, skills, knowledge, and responsibility essential to successful achievement in school and society. We actively involve parents and the community in supporting student learning and development.
- The mission of X Elementary School is to provide opportunities for students to achieve their personal best, become responsible and productive citizens, and embrace lifelong learning in a safe and positive environment.
- X High School will provide a safe, supportive learning environment with opportunities for each student to develop the skills and knowledge to become a responsible, successful citizen.

Goals

A mission describes what the school intends to do, but only in a broad statement. Goals statements offer quantifiable measures that can be examined at a later time to see if the organization is making progress.

The acronym “SMART” has been used to identify effective goal statements for planning. SMART has slightly different variations, depending on the author. Regardless of how the acronym is labeled, it can be used to provide a more comprehensive definition for goal setting:

S - specific, significant, stretching

M - measurable, meaningful, motivational

A - agreed upon, attainable, achievable, acceptable, action-oriented

R - realistic, relevant, reasonable, rewarding, results-oriented

T - time-based, timely, tangible, trackable

The following broader definition of SMART can be helpful in achieving success in both business and personal life. When managing a project the next time, take a moment to consider whether the goals are SMART goals:

- **Specific**
 - well-defined
 - clear to anyone that has a basic knowledge of the project
- **Measurable**
 - knowledge of if the goals are obtainable and how far away from completion
 - knowledge of when the goals have been achieved
- **Agreed Upon**
 - agreement among all stakeholders of what the goals should be
- **Realistic**
 - within the availability of resources, knowledge, and time
- **Time-based**
 - enough time to achieve the goal
 - not too much time, which can affect project performance

Sometimes it is the ambitious goal that captures people’s attention, interest, and passion.

James Collins and
Jerry Porras in their
1996 article entitled,
*Building Your
Company's Vision*

As good as SMART goals are, individual leaders should be cautious about getting bogged down with goals that represent only incremental achievement. Sometimes it is the ambitious goal that captures people's attention, interest, and passion. Schools frequently set goals that describe what they hope to accomplish over the coming year. These goals help align staff to working together more effectively. Often these goals are very tactical, such as, "Achieve 10% of students meeting the state reading standard." These are specific measures, but they do not capture passion and generate enthusiasm.

"Vision without action
is merely a dream.
Action without vision
just passes time. Vision
with action can change
the world."
- Joel Barker

The phrase, "big hairy audacious goal" (BHAG, pronounced BEE-hag) was proposed by James Collins and Jerry Porras in their 1996 article entitled, *Building Your Company's Vision*. A BHAG encourages companies to define visionary goals that are more strategic. In the article, the authors define a BHAG as a form of vision statement "... an audacious 10-to-30-year goal to progress toward an envisioned future."

A true BHAG is clear and compelling, serves as unifying focal point of effort, and acts as a clear catalyst for team spirit. It has a clear finish line, so the organization can know when it has achieved the goal; people like to aim for finish lines. *No Child Left Behind* set such a BHAG goal when it called for 100% of students to be proficient by 2012. Will every student and school meet that? No, but certainly such an ambitious goal captured attention and many schools have made significant progress.

Case Study of A.B. Combs Leadership Magnet Elementary School

A.B. Combs, in Raleigh, N.C., is an example of an elementary school that redefined its vision and mission to initiate school change.

A.B. Combs Leadership Magnet Elementary School is tucked into a diverse neighborhood between North Carolina State University and Research Triangle Park. The school population is approximately 50% white, 25% African-American, and 15% Hispanic. Thirty-five percent are eligible for free/reduced lunch. When walking into Combs, one is awash in a sea of diversity, with approximately 800 students from 68 countries speaking 28 languages. Combs is one of the few public schools offering instruction for the deaf and hard of hearing, and has the largest elementary international population in this Wake County district. Combs also provides ESL instruction.

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Eleven years ago, Combs was faced with the mandate to reinvent itself, or cease and desist. Dwindling magnet enrollment and mediocre test scores threatened the loss of the school's magnet status. Today, Combs is considered a national leader in the creation of a new learning-centered paradigm that focuses on leadership development in young children. It has implemented many exemplary practices, but its overarching instructional focus is on leadership. Evidence of the success of the Combs model is reflected in the sustained increase of the end-of-grade test scores. Combs created and implemented a new learning-centered, leadership-focused paradigm in the throes of burgeoning enrollment (a 35% increase since 1999) and equally daunting increases in the number of ESL, free/reduced lunch, and special needs students. During the past 10 years, the percent of students performing at or above grade level has risen to levels never dreamed about.

"If you don't know where you're going, you might end up someplace else."
- Casey Stengel

Leadership Through the Use of Instructional Practices

Many instructional practices were woven into the leadership framework, including Edwards Deming's work in quality management, Stephen Covey's *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* and *Principle Centered Leadership*, the International Center's Rigor/Relevance Framework, Larry Lezotte's *Correlates of Effective Schools*, Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences, LEGO SERIOUS PLAY and LEGO robotics programs, Robert Cooper's *Executive EQ: Emotional Intelligence*, Ron Clark's *The Essential 55*, and Rick DuFour's professional learning communities. Because of the school's success and popularity, Combs is featured in Dr. Covey's latest book, *The Leader in Me*. Dr. Covey has stated many times, "A.B. Combs is a model that should be replicated around the world." To date, the school has hosted over 3,000 visitors from every corner of the world.

The Covey and Baldrige philosophies, along with the Rigor/Relevance Framework, create a culture that supports Combs' mission, "To develop global leaders one child at a time," which guides the school in bringing to fruition the vision, "By dwelling in possibilities, we will create pathways of excellence that will inspire hope and promise for a better tomorrow." All staff members receive training in the application of these philosophies.

Combs' program is grounded in the belief that building cooperative relationships and nurturing responsibility, kindness, and good judgment

Combs' program is grounded in the belief that building cooperative relationships and nurturing responsibility, kindness, and good judgment are the basis for creating a successful community of learners.

What was once thought impossible — a learning-centered paradigm that focuses on leadership development in young children — is now being replicated at schools across the United States and around the world.

are the basis for creating a successful community of learners. By developing the whole child — socially, emotionally, academically, and ethically — the program fosters a climate of principle-centered personal leadership. Empowering students to be leaders of their own learning has resulted in more engaged and happy students.

As a result of infusing the Baldrige practices and using quality tools, data collection and analysis, problem-based learning, and rubric development in the classroom, students are empowered as decision makers and leaders of their own learning. At Combs, assessment drives instruction. Formative assessments are used to measure learning early in the learning process, allowing teachers to fine tune their instructional strategies to respond most effectively to students' individual needs. Quarterly benchmark assessments allow individual and grade level analysis.

The goals for the Combs school community are to develop a collective vision of student success, to serve as strong role models, and to use data to track progress and drive instruction. The four roles of leadership taught by Dr. Covey have guided many of the changes that the school has undertaken. One of the four crucial roles of leadership is modeling or "walk the talk of leadership." Leadership is modeled at Combs in the following initiatives:

- **Spotlight on Leadership.** Through this program, the school invites local, state, and national leaders to be interviewed by its students, underscoring the guests' leadership qualities and accomplishments as well as the contributions they have made to the community.
- **Student Greeters.** In this practice, students who model social etiquette and strong communication skills meet each visitor at the entrance to the school.
- **Laboratory for Learning.** Combs has provided more than 200 hours of staff development training in the past four years and has been recognized as a model elementary school for leadership development in young children, with teams of teachers serving as consultants and trainers for elementary schools across the United States and Canada.
- **Leadership Day Programs.** In the past four years, more than 3,200 educators from around the world have visited the school to

Instructional Leadership — Quadrant D Leadership Practices

learn more about the school's leadership development model via its Leadership Day Programs. It has recently hosted international guests from 26 countries.

- **Alignment.** Another of the four roles of leadership, alignment assures that processes, systems, and human resources are reflected in the school's mission. To align classroom instruction with student achievement, many different assessment techniques are used to reflect student progress, including the following:
 - Elimination of random acts of improvement. To ensure that everything Combs does is aligned with its vision and mission, each initiative is examined to validate its place in student achievement. Baldrige criteria and the application of quality tools enhance classroom instruction and promote continuous academic improvement. The staff and students developed criteria for excellence and then designed and adopted rubrics that resulted in significant increases in the caliber and quality of project-based work.
 - Data notebooks, electronic portfolios, and student-led conferences. At the beginning of each nine-week period, children, in collaboration with their parents and teacher, set their own personal and academic goals. Progress toward these goals is charted daily in students' data notebooks or electronic portfolios, which serve as the basis for quarterly student-led parent-teacher conferences.
 - Victory folders and self-assessment. Each week, children are given the opportunity to reflect on their work and select samples of their finest efforts for insertion in their Victory Folders. These samples create a portfolio of student work that charts progress over the course of the year.
 - Achievement as measured by standardized tests. According to the North Carolina state standards, schools with more than 90% of end-of-grade test scores at or above grade level are designated Schools of Excellence by the State Board of Education.

Mission Statement

Staff know that they are making a difference in the lives of their children. Evidence can be found not only in their grades and standardized tests,

Staff know that they are making a difference in the lives of their children. Evidence can be found not only in their grades and standardized tests, but even more fundamentally in their perspective of what is possible in their lives.

but even more fundamentally in their perspective of what is possible in their lives. This change was most evident in the student-led creation of the program's mission statement. The children, led by a master Baldrige/Covey teacher, created the following mission statement via a process of asking why five times:

Q: Why are you at Kids Club?

A: To get help with homework.

Q: Why do you need help with homework?

A: So we can pass to the next grade.

Q: Why do you want to pass to the next grade?

A: So we are not in the same grade next year.

Q: Why don't you want to be in the same grade?

A: So we can go to college.

Q: Why do you want to go to college?

A: To make our dreams come true.

The mission statement motivates the children. It inspires everyone involved with the program. As a Combs ESL teacher remarked, "This is the first time I have ever heard the children express an awareness of college, let alone a desire to attend."

Combs students understand that true leaders give back to their community. Each grade level team of students undertakes a community service project, such as collecting toys for needy children, conducting a winter coat drive, or raising funds for the Duke University Cancer Ward. Students also give back through schoolwide efforts, such as collecting canned goods for the North Carolina Food Bank. Combs has collected more food than any other school in eastern North Carolina. However, student generosity is most evident in gestures of the heart, such as raising more than \$1,400 to help a classmate's fight against leukemia, collecting a mountain of goods and donations for an immigrant family that unexpectedly lost its father, and raising more than \$1,400 for Oprah's Leadership Academy for Girls.

Leadership is also a focus for parent and community involvement. A Leadership Advisory Council composed of parents and community leaders provides feedback on leadership initiatives.

Effective integration of technology is about increasing student engagement and learning; it is not just about changing the way education happens. It is also about changing the way everyone thinks about teaching and learning.

Technology for learning can also be a huge benefit for students with learning disabilities. Used wisely, technology can contribute to increased efficiency and more time for learning. Technology has changed the way teachers and students manage, store, and share their work to enhance learning. In short, the vital role played by the technology leader cannot be overstated. The goal of the technology leader must be to make digital technology as available and transparent as paper, pencil, and books were in the 20th century learning process.

The degree to which technology is beneficial to learning depends on the way it is applied in the classroom and beyond. When used effectively, technology offers great possibilities for expanding learning beyond what schools have taught. Among the many advantages of technology are:

- Puts vast amounts of knowledge at students' fingertips. Databases on every subject imaginable are available for study in all curriculum areas. Encyclopedias and complete collections of literary works reside on compact disks. Telecommunication satellite links expand the walls of classrooms to encompass the world.
- Affords students a chance to delve deeply into a topic. Greater accessibility to information gives students the opportunity to gather data easily, and analyze and synthesize the data in new ways. Students can manipulate data to identify the portions that are relevant to their needs. They can transfer data from one subject area to another and integrate the information to enhance their understanding, giving them greater control over their learning.
- Provides teachers with a tool to create their own teaching materials, to go beyond what is in the textbook and use alternate resources, and to organize information in new ways.
- Accommodates various learning styles and can enhance instructional strategies — a great aid to teachers.

Instructional Technology

The goal of the technology leader must be to make digital technology as available and transparent as paper, pencil, and books were in the 20th century learning process.

One of the most powerful ways to focus on instructional change is to use technology.

Technology is most often used as an additional teaching strategy or as part of an individual student assignment. Technology is most effective when is it not simply an occasional add-on to teaching, but rather a regularly used tool in instruction. The most pervasive changes in teaching have occurred in schools which make the investment in one-to-one computing where each student has his or her own personal computing device. When schools make such significant investments, appropriate follow up will ensure that the technology is actually used, and used in ways that enhance student learning.

Tools for Instructional Technology

Leadership for Integration of Technology is provided on the following page.



Leadership for Integration of Technology

Pervasive	Considerable	Partial	Initiated	Absent	
Vision					
					Leaders actively inspire and facilitate, among all stakeholders, a shared vision for the use of current technology.
					Strategic plans are aligned with a shared vision to implement technology initiatives.
					Leaders advocate for policies, programs, and funding to support the vision for technology.
					Leaders ensure that families and the public are kept informed about the school's goals and progress on using technology as a learning resource.
Culture Change					
					Leaders model the technology tools they expect teachers to use in their classrooms.
					A clear understanding pervades across the school community about the meaning and practice of technology integration.
					Risk taking and trying new approaches to technology are encouraged, and leaders support early adopters.
					Established policies are in place for the safe, legal, and ethical uses of digital information and technology.
					Students and staff promote and model responsible social interactions on the use of technology and information.
					A shared cultural understanding and involvement in global issues occurs through the use of contemporary communication and collaborative tools.
System Change					
					Data is collected on the use of technology, the development of technology-related skills, and its effectiveness in improving student achievement.
					School filtering systems provide adequate protection without stifling effective student and staff use of technology.
					Staff who are highly competent in the creative use of technology for advancing academic goals are recruited and retained.
					Staff stay abreast of education research and emerging trends about the effective use of technology; they also encourage the evaluation of new technologies to improve student learning.
					The school has strategic partnerships to support the use of technology.

Pervasive	Considerable	Partial	Initiated	Absent	
Instruction					
					Technology is used by students to produce work of high rigor and high relevance, rather than for the passive recall of knowledge.
					Student work is created and stored using technology.
					Available technology is used to the maximum potential in classroom instruction.
					Teachers have convenient and sufficient access to technology for student work.
					Students use technology responsibly. They are good digital citizens.
Support					
					Appropriate resources are provided to support effective classroom implementation of technology.
					Students have access to appropriate, current, and functioning technology equipment.
					Students have access to appropriate software for doing work and acquiring current technology skills.
					Students have adequate Internet access and the school has the capacity for all students to use fully networked technology.
					All students have equitable access to appropriate digital tools and resources.
					Professional development and learning time are provided to staff to support effective classroom implementation of technology.
					Staff and students have access to the same level of technology for professional and classroom use.
					Instructional leaders make decisions about technology with input from technology leaders, not the reverse.
					Students are given opportunities to provide professional learning and technical support to staff.
					Staff have access to coaches, experts, and technical support to keep the technology operational and to acquire skills they need in a timely manner.

Case Study of Zebra New Tech High School

Zebra New Tech High School, in Rochester, Ind., is an example of a school that used technology integration as the focus for instructional change.

The Rochester Community School Corporation serves 1,900 students from pre-Kindergarten to 12th grade in the rural community of Rochester, Ind. The corporation consists of two elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school. Rochester High School is a comprehensive 9-12 school with approximately 600 students. Two years ago, the school began a four-year transformation from a traditional high school to the New Tech model, one of more than 40 such schools in the United States. Rochester is not a choice school. It is undergoing a whole school conversion, which is a departure from the norm for New Tech schools. Presently, the name “Zebra New Tech” is used to connote the courses taught using the New Tech system, which are all grade 9 and 10 courses, as well as most science, technology, and foreign language classes at Rochester.

At Zebra New Tech, students engage in project-based curricular units with real-world relevance, which emphasizes teamwork. With a one-to-one student/computer ratio, technology becomes a foundation tool for learning. In addition to state content standards, students are evaluated on work ethic, oral and written literacy, teamwork, and critical thinking. Community service and an internship will be required of all graduates of New Tech; dual enrollment and college credits are recommended, but are not a formal requirement. The New Tech High Learning System™ is a unique suite of software tools that supports a collaborative learning environment that is focused on 21st century learning, with a project-based learning approach and authentic assessments on multiple measures.

Rochester serves approximately 600 students; 7% are minorities, 33% are eligible for free/reduced lunch, and 13% are students with disabilities. Typically, 78% attend postsecondary schools, 2% join the military, and the remaining 20% enter the workforce. Staff include the principal, assistant principal, administrative assistant/director of student support services, 34 teachers, two counselors, a media specialist, and a district director of technology. A balanced calendar for all schools in the corporation provides for four quarters of nine weeks each, followed by a week of recess, and an optional intercession week dedicated to credit recovery, the improvement of grades, and enrichment in each quarter. The high

school day begins with a 20-minute period of silent sustained reading for students and staff, followed by a traditional seven-period schedule.

In the past decade, the Rochester school community faced many challenges, including a declining graduation rate, an unacceptable dropout rate, lower scores on standardized tests, students who were not engaged in their learning, and graduates who were not prepared for success at work or in college. After an extensive needs assessment and examination of school reform models by a school and community task force, Rochester decided the New Tech model best suited their school, community, and student needs. Rochester is breaking new ground as it transforms a traditional high school to a New Tech model over a period of four years. Rochester was the first small rural school in the nation to undertake this bold whole school transformation.

Relationships Come First

The school has long believed that rigor, relevance, and relationships are important. However, the transformation to Zebra New Tech has highlighted the importance of relationships first, followed by relevance, then rigor. The strong commitment to personalization, teamwork, and collaboration has dramatically increased the interactions between students and staff in New Tech classes. Administrators and teachers report that discipline referrals have declined and interventions have shifted to be more preventive and positive, often focusing on a student's academic difficulties or relationships. Students and staff alike report a greater sense of community, understanding, respect, and cooperation.

Work ethic is measured in all New Tech classes. Freshmen and sophomores have developed outstanding project management skills, and students use technology that emulates the workplace environment. Assignments are checked, tasks are tracked, due dates are reviewed, and projects move forward. Students have a much better sense of how to set priorities and use technology effectively.

The Indiana State Board of Education recognized New Tech with its Spotlight on Learning award for challenging the traditional bounds of education, while delivering increased student achievement and providing students with valuable skills that are essential in a 21st century economy.

All freshmen take an interdisciplinary global perspectives class, which is a team-taught, double-period combination of English and geography. There

The transformation to Zebra New Tech has highlighted the importance of relationships first, followed by relevance, then rigor.

is no tracking or honors section, and all students are exposed to the same projects. While there are occasional group instruction and workshop/lecture activities, much of the work is organized around projects that allow students great flexibility in designing end products. For example, in designing an interactive, electronic, Native American museum, students follow their own interests and resources, and individual talents, motivation, and abilities are given an opportunity to flourish.

Sophomores take the double-period, team-taught English 10/digital media (digital communications) class, which provides them with an interdisciplinary experience coupled with advanced media applications. In one project, entitled “Hat Day Marketing,” students partner with the business and arts communities to create brochures for tours during the holiday season. A similar interdisciplinary, project-based experience was planned for English 11/U.S. history and Algebra 2/physics for 2009-10. Dual enrollment opportunities for all students have expanded dramatically in the past two years to more than 30 courses, which are taught at Rochester, the local community college, or online.

Project- and problem-based learning, as well as stretching students, are not confined to only New Tech classes. The school has implemented Mandarin Chinese and Project Lead The Way courses in the introduction to engineering design, civil engineering and architecture, computer-integrated manufacturing, and principles of biomedical science. Project Lead The Way courses are open to all students; those who complete all four classes can earn as much as 12 college credits at Purdue University and other universities. Students in choir will research a disease and investigate how music therapy might be a benefit. In the senior sociology class, students are assigned a weekly topic that they research and debate on Friday. The school offers classes in theatre arts, newspaper, and yearbook — the “ultimate projects,” according to the teachers.

Well defined rubrics with multiple criteria are used for project assessment. New Tech has found that many more students are successful in passing classes since they can demonstrate competence in more ways than through traditional assessments. Students do not see the teacher as an obstacle to achievement. According to one student interview, students who are average or below average under a traditional system often flourish under New Tech, as they can play to their strengths. Teachers observe that high ability students have been challenged much more than

The products required in a project go beyond memorization and recall that were the former standard. Almost all projects utilize writing, math, oral presentation, technology skills, and technical reading.

in the past. The products required in a project go beyond memorization and recall that were the former standard. Almost all projects utilize writing, math, oral presentation, technology skills, and technical reading. Students who finish projects early are encouraged — and rewarded — when they go the extra mile and review the assessment rubric.

By changing the teaching and learning environment, a new dynamic has emerged in New Tech classrooms. Students are engaged in their learning through rigorous, standards-based, project learning implemented in a one-to-one computer-student environment. While the technology provides access to tools that support each student's work, a collaborative team typically completes each project. Projects bring meaning and life to the academic content, while at the same time developing student empowerment and ownership of learning outcomes that are driven by team-based collaborative strategies.

In New Tech classrooms, students are active learners and work on projects individually, with a partner, or in groups. Students rarely work in isolation and often are asked to present before their peers or authentic audiences. Writing in some form is accomplished each day, whether it is a daily journal entry or part of a larger presentation.

In a typical instructional period, the teacher might present a brief workshop or “roll up,” outlining core principles of a lesson or how to use visual aids in the project. Students then break into small learning groups for project work or use computers for research and study. Students ask peers with special knowledge to tutor them if that will improve their project. The teacher moves freely from one group to another, observing, commenting, and suggesting, as appropriate. Individual extra help can be provided much more naturally and easily in a New Tech class — by either the teacher or by fellow students.

Teachers and administrators consistently report that students are more actively engaged in New Tech classes, although they also report that it is easy to spot students who are totally disengaged — either visually during the class or by utilizing the Learning Management System. While some students said it takes time to acclimate and others said they were better book learners, most students felt the grading system was fair, as it was known ahead of time, assessed skills other than those tapped in a unit test, and allowed them to achieve better grades by working harder in their individual areas of strength.

A Group Project Contract is initiated for each project, and students must specify the tasks, members involved, individual and group responsibilities, deadlines, and expected outcomes that will be graded. Groups are formed for each project, with teachers maintaining control, but accepting student input regarding the constitution of a group. A unique feature of the group contract outlines the reasons a group may fire a nonproductive member. This step has proved to be a difficult one for both teachers and students to take, and criteria and procedures are becoming more well established.

Technology Integration

New Tech staff use technology to support the school culture and instructional methods, creating a workplace environment for the students. Teachers store projects in digital briefcases and post their daily course agendas and student grades to the web. Students have their own e-mail accounts and server space, and create digital portfolios of their work. Grades, assignments, rubrics, and assessments are available 24/7 for students, parents, and teachers.

The New Tech school model places a high value on integrating critical 21st century skills with traditional course content. To accomplish this goal, problem-based learning is the primary instructional strategy. New Tech teachers say that they can focus on instruction, look for the best method to teach a topic, differentiate better, and move away from relying on a textbook as a primary source. Instead of handing out daily assignments, teachers assign periodic projects with different components. Components may include a written essay and a digital project such as a website, PowerPoint presentation, or photo essay. Typically, students are asked to present their work orally to their classmates or other audiences. Through a relevant, rigorous, standards-based, one-to-one computer/student environment, students develop a wide range of skills, including collaboration, critical thinking, and technology proficiency. These skills prepare them for a higher level of success in postsecondary education and the modern workforce.

In a traditional learning environment, students might listen to a lecture on monetary and fiscal policy. At New Tech, students may be presented with a project to save the nation from an economic crisis similar to the 1970's oil embargo. Instead of filling out worksheets on Newton's Laws, collaborative groups might work to develop a new sport to be played on the moon. Teams at New Tech might build a virtual museum exhibit that

Technology is integrated into every class and is used as a tool, rather than taught as the subject.

captures the experiences of minority groups in the 1930s, versus writing a research paper on the Great Depression.

At Zebra New Tech, full implementation of project-based learning has been realized in the interdisciplinary, team-taught, double-period courses: 9th grade global perspectives and 10th grade digital communications, as well as in most science and Project Lead The Way classes. An interdisciplinary English 11/U.S. history class has been implemented for all juniors. As with many New Tech schools, implementing sustainable, long-range projects for the duration of the courses in math and foreign language have proven to be more difficult. In these courses, direct instruction is more prevalent and a larger number of smaller projects have been initiated to support content standards and course objectives. In geometry project entitled, "If You Advertise, They Will Buy," students analyze and create Super Bowl advertising in order to explore logical reasoning. Foreign language students write children's books or commercials in the target language, update visitor center information for a city, or create and act out their own version of Don Quixote.

While the conversion of Rochester High School to Zebra New Tech will occur as 9th grade class of 2008-09 progresses through high school, the school has been very deliberate and thoughtful in avoiding a have/have not atmosphere. In this second year of implementation, all science classes except one are being taught at New Tech. Students in biology examine the ethical implications of biological research and application in the Designer Babies project; physics students examine and design roller coasters and air bags for eggs, while those in chemistry investigate impending litigation, including the scientific issues regarding an exploding bag of popcorn that caused physical damage to a consumer!

While much classroom work is project-based and involves working in teams, there is a great deal of flexibility in individual work, input, and assessment. A cursory look at grade folders from various classes indicates that students might receive grades for critical thinking, oral and written communication, work ethic, and collaboration. Other grades may reflect homework, quizzes and unit tests, journals, bell ringers, lab write-ups, and presentations. One of the powerful features of the Learning Management System is that it provides teachers with comprehensive and instantaneous feedback on student progress on a variety of measures for each project. For instance, it is relatively easy for a teacher to determine whether a student or group of students are having difficulty mastering

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a concept, then the teacher can provide individual help or conduct an appropriate workshop to address the deficiency.

Once at New Tech, virtually all students enroll in the double-period global perspectives or biology class, which provide opportunities to orient them to the school, the culture, contracts, technology, PeBL™, and other activities that may be needed or are beneficial to students. Daily journaling by students provides teachers and the administration with an unusual and effective means to learn what students are thinking and if they are experiencing difficulty. Recently, the principal even asked for student input on a book regarding the overall deficient reading habits and knowledge of current events among high school students. The principal was pleasantly surprised by the swift, voluminous, and thoughtful earful (or keyboard-full!) received from New Tech students.

The journey to transform Rochester High School into a New Tech school and to enhance the entire district with rigor, relevance, and relationships; project-based learning; and technology innovations began in June 2005. A team of administrators, board members, teachers, parents, and business and community members attended the North Central Association Summer Institute for Strategic Planning and the International Center's Model Schools Conference to begin the process of strategic planning and to examine high school redesign models. From this start, members of the Rochester School Corporation participated in the International Center's High School Redesign Symposium and Indiana's Center for Excellence in Leadership of Learning Conference in fall 2005. During the 2005-06 school year, a needs assessment was completed and a broad-based district committee began meeting to develop a strategic plan, which was formally adopted in June 2006. In the summer of 2006, a smaller committee visited a New Tech school in North Carolina, followed in the fall by a group of 13 people who traveled to Napa New Tech High for a study tour. Soon thereafter, the district formally approved the application to become a New Tech school.

Teaching and learning in the New Tech model are collaborative, personalized, and interdisciplinary. Ninth and 10th grade New Tech teachers have a common preparation period and have used many of the six half-days of professional development during the school year to create and implement original project-based learning (PBL) activities. These meetings and groups provide the teachers with a forum for developing interdisciplinary, real-world lessons, problems, and projects. Critical Friends' protocols are being employed more frequently and

effectively as the year has progressed. The school has been assigned a New Tech coach — a former teacher at Napa New Tech — who will assist with PBL and other issues of mutual concern during the first five years of implementation of the New Tech model. Zebra New Tech teachers report that often they send their coach ideas, especially the PBL invitation/entry document for input.

While the New Tech teachers have spent a considerable amount of professional development time implementing the PBL model, the Rochester School Corporation has provided all teachers with a program of professional development, primarily during the six early dismissal days throughout the year. The range of topics have included curriculum mapping, lessons in Quadrant D of the Rigor/Relevance Framework, analysis and response to intervention, technology proficiency, and formative assessments for math.

Rigor/Relevance Framework

The power of the Rigor/Relevance Framework is that it creates an opportunity for teachers to pursue their own instructional improvement, which is much more empowering and consistent with Quadrant D Leadership.

Using the Rigor/Relevance Framework is the most effective instructional practice to achieve visionary leadership focused on the target of rigor, relevance, and relationships. The Rigor/Relevance Framework does not prescribe a specific curriculum or instructional strategy; it provides a model for the type of student learning that is consistent with higher level thinking skills (rigor) and higher level application (relevance). Once teachers begin to understand the Rigor/Relevance Framework and reflect on their instructional practice, it leads to significant changes in instruction. The power of the Rigor/Relevance Framework is that it creates an opportunity for teachers to pursue their own instructional improvement, which is much more empowering and consistent with Quadrant D Leadership. The Rigor/Relevance Framework also provides a common way of looking at curriculum and instruction, which facilitates sharing of instructional practices across instructional areas and results in a common focus and greater collaboration for improving instruction.

Leadership Strategies

The steps to introduce rigor and relevance begin with having staff understand and apply the framework to their own teaching areas. The Rigor/Relevance Framework is not new, but builds on what most teachers already know in the Knowledge Taxonomy by Benjamin Bloom. Staff should begin to understand that they teach in all four quadrants and

recognize the characteristics of student work and learning in each of the quadrants. While it is important to aspire to Quadrant D learning, teachers will find most effective instruction includes elements of all four quadrants. When teachers aspire to Quadrant D as the end goal of a lesson, they will develop better quality instruction and lead students to higher levels of rigor and relevance. This process results in greater retention of learning and increased student engagement.

One of the beginning ways to apply the Rigor/Relevance Framework is to analyze test questions. Ask groups of teachers to analyze common end-of-course assessments. This step enables them to reflect on the quality of those assessments and to come to an agreement about whether they have achieved the appropriate level of rigor and relevance. Teachers can then begin to analyze their individual assessments to ensure that they are comfortable with the level of rigor and relevance expected of students. Using the framework frequently causes teachers to realize the low level of their assessments.

Teachers should also analyze state tests. In addition to analyzing tests for their correlation to individual standards and the format of the test questions, it is also important to determine the level of rigor and relevance. Such an analysis will lead to deeper understanding of areas that are tested and how to prepare students adequately for state testing.

Once teachers develop an understanding of the Rigor/Relevance Framework and include this framework as part of their vocabulary, they can reflect upon existing lessons that meet the definition of Quadrant D learning. Teachers can learn from one another in sharing examples of high rigor and high relevance learning in Quadrant D. While identifying these examples and sharing them with other teachers as exemplary teaching activities (which should not be duplicated exactly), teachers can think about their own instruction and the changes that are necessary for their students to achieve high rigor and high relevance.

Gold Seal Lessons are a vehicle developed by the International Center to share lesson ideas for instructional unit plans. These lessons are often consistent with high levels of rigor and relevance (Quadrant D) and represent the most challenging ideas for teachers to use as good teaching suggestions. By having teachers go through the process of developing Gold Seal Lessons — working in a collaborative environment — they can offer a number of ideas that can be crafted into a good Gold Seal Lesson.

When teachers aspire to Quadrant D as the end goal of a lesson, they will develop better quality instruction and lead students to higher levels of rigor and relevance. This process results in greater retention of learning and increased student engagement.

Please see the Appendix for a more detailed explanation of the Rigor/Relevance Framework.

Teachers should also be encouraged to modify their own lessons to increase the level of rigor and relevance. They might do this by adapting an existing Gold Seal Lesson to their own course or grade level. Or, they might select different strategies or modify assessments to raise the level of rigor and relevance. Again, this strategy is most successful when teachers can work in a collaborative environment within a grade level or a department.

Once teachers begin to modify their own lessons, they can continue to share instructional practices on how they raised the level of rigor and relevance. This collaborative sharing is a powerful way to modify instruction around the common focus of the Rigor/Relevance Framework.

Tools for Rigor/Relevance Framework

The following tools support the use of the Rigor/Relevance Framework.

The Rigor/Relevance Overview is included in the Appendix.

- Rigor/Relevance Framework
- Rigorous and Relevant Teaching and Learning Checklist
- Leadership for Rigor/Relevance/Relationship — An Agenda for Change

TOOL

Rigor/Relevance Framework®

K n o w l e d g e T a x o n o m y	Evaluation	6					
	Synthesis	5	C Assimilation		D Adaptation		
	Analysis	4					
	Application	3					
	Comprehension	2	A Acquisition		B Application		
	Knowledge/ Awareness	1					
			1	2	3	4	5
			Knowledge in one discipline	Apply in discipline	Apply across disciplines	Apply to real-world predictable situations	Apply to real-world unpredictable situations

Application Model



Rigorous and Relevant Teaching and Learning Checklist

Yes No

The teaching design...

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | is based on data about students and curriculum. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | is clearly linked to priority state standards. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | has an expectation for levels of rigor and relevance. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | uses appropriate assessments aligned with the rigor and relevance of expectations. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | is clearly guided by big ideas and essential questions. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | uses strategies that are aligned with the rigor and relevance of expectations. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | includes the knowledge and skills necessary for expected student performance. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | uses authentic performance tasks that ask students to demonstrate their understanding and apply knowledge and skills. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | uses clear evaluation criteria and performance standards evaluations of student products and performances. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | uses a variety of resources - the textbook is only one resource among many. |

The classroom...

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | has student work and essential questions as central to classroom activities. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | has high expectations and incentives for all students to achieve the expected performance. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | has a culture that treats students and their ideas with dignity and respect. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | displays evaluation criteria or scoring guides. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | has samples of high-quality student work on display. |

The teacher...

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | informs students of the expected performance, essential questions, performance requirements, and assessment criteria at the beginning of the lesson or unit. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | engages students' interest when introducing a lesson. |

Yes	No	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	uses a variety of strategies that match the expected level of rigor and relevance and learning styles of students.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	facilitates students' active construction of meaning (rather than simply telling).
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	uses questioning, coaching, and feedback effectively to stimulate student reflection.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	facilitates student acquisition of basic knowledge and skills necessary for student performance.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	differentiates instruction to meet individual student needs.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	adjusts instruction according to reflection and feedback from students.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	uses information from ongoing assessments to check for student learning and misconceptions along the way.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	uses a variety of resources to promote understanding.

The students...

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	can describe the goals (student performance) of the lesson or unit.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	can explain what they are doing and why (i.e., how today's work relates to the larger unit or course goals).
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	are engaged throughout the lesson or unit.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	can describe the criteria by which their work will be evaluated.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	are engaged in activities that help them to apply what they have learned.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	demonstrate that they are learning the background knowledge and skills that support their performance and essential questions.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	have opportunities to generate relevant questions.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	are able to explain and justify their work and their answers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	use the criteria or scoring guides to revise their work.



Leadership for Rigor/Relevance/Relationship — An Agenda for Change

Pervasive	Considerable	Partial	Initiated	Absent	
Envision <i>"Vision without action is a dream. Action without vision is simply passing the time. Action with Vision is making a positive difference." -Joel Barker</i>					
					Share information on WHY rigor, relevance, and relationships are important.
					Collect ongoing evidence of the need for rigor, relevance, and relationships.
					Engage staff in discussions to understand, embrace, and reflect on the need for rigor, relevance, and relationships.
					Establish common definitions of rigor and relevance.
					Establish common definitions of relationships to support student learning.
					Establish common definitions of relationships to support staff collaboration.
					Share examples of rigor and relevance in the school.
					Connect rigor and relevance with instruction and assessment practices.

Pervasive	Considerable	Partial	Initiated	Absent	
Discover "The real act of discovery consists not in finding new lands but seeing with new eyes." -Marcel Proust					
					Analyze local assessments for levels of rigor and relevance.
					Identify examples of Quadrant D lessons in the school.
					Share examples of high rigor and high relevance learning.
					Analyze state assessments for levels of rigor and relevance.
					Conduct student focus groups on rigor and relevance.
					Conduct student focus groups on relationships.
					Survey students as to the current levels of learning support and relationships.
					Share examples good learning support and relationships with staff.
Create "The goal isn't to live forever; the goal is to create something that will." -Chuck Palahniuk					
					Design interdisciplinary lessons.
					Design new activities to strengthen learning relationships among students.
					Design activities to strengthen support and relationships for students in the transition year into the school.
					Create new instructional activities that increase rigor and/or relevance.
					Create new assessments that increase rigor and/or relevance.



Pervasive	Considerable	Partial	Initiated	Absent	
<p style="text-align: center;">Build</p> <p style="text-align: center;">"You lead today by building teams and placing others first." -Jeff Immelt</p>					
					Share Rigor/Relevance Framework with students.
					Explain Rigor/Relevance Framework to parents.
					Engage staff in applying Rigor/Relevance Framework to their instruction.
					Explain Relationship Framework to staff and reflect on current levels of relationships.
					Create consensus on priority standards for learning.
					Map instruction at each grade and each course to state standards.
					Agree on a common lesson format for high rigor/high relevance instruction.
					Reflect on positive and negative staff behaviors that influence learning relationships.
					Analyze strengths of extra-curricular activities that contribute to positive learning relationships.
					Establish student learning criteria and data measures for school that relate to core and stretch learning.
					Establish student learning criteria and data measures for school that relate to student engagement and personal skill development
					Improve staff collaboration through team building activities.

Pervasive	Considerable	Partial	Initiated	Absent	
Develop "When you shift people's perceptions, their actions follow." -Rayona Sharpnack					
					Develop staff skills to create, adapt, and use performance assessments.
					Develop staff skills to identify and write good test questions.
					Develop common performance tasks for typical student performance, e.g. writing, presentations.
					Develop staff skills to write high rigor/high relevance performance tasks.
					Develop staff ability to select and use instructional strategies appropriate for high rigor/high relevance.
					Develop staff skills in building positive learning relationships.
					Develop staff ability to create classroom procedures that build learning relationships.
					Create structures and support for daily professional learning.
					Create a model of peer teaching and coaching.



Pervasive	Considerable	Partial	Initiated	Absent	
<p style="text-align: center;">Support</p> <p style="text-align: center;">"Some people change when they see the light, others when they feel the heat." -Caroline Schoeder</p>					
					Conduct frequent walk-throughs to observe instruction.
					Include rigor and relevance as a part of the observation protocols for classroom walk-throughs.
					Provide opportunities for peer review of instruction.
					Conduct peer review of learning experiences for rigor and relevance.
					Conduct celebrations of achievement of rigor and relevance.
					Conduct celebrations of developing learning relationships.
					Analyze data of student learning criteria on core and stretch learning related to rigor and relevance.
					Analyze data of student learning criteria on student engagement and personal skills development related to relationships.
					Staff gives each other feedback on positive relationship behaviors.

More extensive information about using the Rigor/Relevance Framework for instructional leadership can be found in the resource kits, *Leadership for Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships* and *Using the Rigor/Relevance Framework for Planning and Instruction*.

Case Study of Kennesaw Mountain High School

Kennesaw Mountain High School, in Cobb County, Ga., is an example of a high school using rigor and relevance to provide visionary leadership.

Kennesaw Mountain High School, is a national model of how to hold high expectations for all students and meet individual student needs within a large comprehensive high school. Located in the city of Kennesaw, the school serves northwest Cobb County, which has the second largest school system in Georgia and the thirtieth largest system in the United States. From its opening in 2000, the school staff focused on high rigor and high relevance using the Rigor/Relevance Framework.

Kennesaw Mountain is a large suburban school within a supportive community. In 2007-08, 225 certified staff members served the enrollment of 2,880 students. The student population consists of 66% white, 18% African-American, 8% Hispanic, 4% Asian, and 3% other students. Students with disabilities are 8.7% of the student population, 18% gifted, 2% ESOL, and 17.4% free/reduced lunch.

Kennesaw Mountain recognizes the challenges that it will face during the next few years, especially in the area of diversity. The staff realizes that they must continually to evaluate their programs to ensure that they are meeting the needs of all students. From administrators to classroom teachers to students, all deeply embrace the concept of setting and achieving rigorous and relevant academic standards. Curriculum and supportive instructional activities have been organized and multiple pathways have been established to enable all students to achieve instructional goals.

High Expectations for All Students

Students are held to high expectations and supported in numerous ways. It is clear throughout the building that students are valued. This culture of respect is due in large part to highly visible and successful service learning and character education programs. The staff have a passion for meeting the needs of students and have support from the administration to do so.

This culture of respect is due in large part to highly visible and successful service learning and character education programs.

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High expectations are evidenced in many ways within the school. The goal that all students will achieve high standards is non-negotiable; *how* students will achieve those standards varies greatly from teacher to teacher, department to department, and student to student. Instruction is a top priority with “bell-to-bell protection of instruction.” The school works hard to create high expectations and expects students to be constantly striving to improve. Recognizing the value of success for all students, the school focuses on closing the student achievement gap and on critical thinking skills for all students.

While Kennesaw Mountain sets high expectations for all students, it also provides extra assistance for those who need it. The school is committed to students using higher level cognitive skills and it provides training for teachers who incorporate alternative activities and assessments in order to encourage the use of those skills.

The education philosophy at Kennesaw Mountain supports the notion that all children can learn, if they “believe and achieve.” This is not just a program; it is a very effective strategy through which all students, staff, parents, businesses, and the community at large perceive and approach education. Through diverse education programs, extracurricular activities, and a commitment to community service, the staff and students of Kennesaw Mountain promote a safe, ethical, and studious school culture.

Since Kennesaw Mountain opened in 2000 success has been achieved in both academic and extracurricular programs. Student scores on the Georgia High School Graduation Tests have shown improvement in most areas during the past four years, and they surpass the district and state averages in all academic areas. Notable is performance on the English language arts test, where the pass rate for all students was 98%, the regular program student pass rate was 100%, special education was 88%, and English language learners was 78%. The school is making AYP, and students score above the district and the state on the SAT.

Rigorous and Relevant Curriculum

The school's commitment to a rigorous and relevant curriculum for all students is reflected in the course offerings and organizational structures. Through vertical teaming and other initiatives, faculty members work with feeder schools to identify students with the potential to be successful in honors and AP courses. These students and their parents are invited to

presentations before they enter high school; once they enter high school, they are assisted academically as they prepare for upper level courses. Offering 25 AP courses, as well as a plethora of honors and magnet program classes, Kennesaw Mountain has a challenging curriculum and encourages all students to engage in it. Typically, 46% of the student body is enrolled in honors and/or AP courses.

All students are encouraged to pursue academic success and achievement at Kennesaw Mountain. One unique opportunity is the Mountain Top Café, run by students with disabilities. Each day, students oversee the preparation and sale of coffee beverages to students and staff. These students are developing important life skills that will prepare them for the future, such as teamwork, problem solving, and individual accountability. The Mountain Top Café staff are considered employees and it is their responsibility to oversee the operation of their business, including inventory, purchasing, paying rent, and distributing salaries. The tremendous success of this student-run business provides these students, who are not in a traditional academic environment, with an opportunity for recognition of the achievements that they make on a daily basis.

A commitment to student achievement is paramount at Kennesaw Mountain. Recognizing that not all students enter high school with the same skills, the faculty has adopted a school performance goal that includes reducing gaps in student achievement by engaging all students in a rigorous and relevant curriculum. In a culture that encourages teachers to question paradigms and “think outside the box,” teachers feel free to be innovative as they make learning challenging for their students.

Training for staff focuses on incorporating higher-order cognitive skills in discussions, activities, assignments, and assessments in all content areas. A school writing initiative demands that students must do timed writings in all subjects three times per semester; this initiative was introduced to further students’ thinking skills and to help prepare them for standardized writing tests.

Through staff development activities and professional development groups, teachers have a clear understanding of how to achieve rigor and relevance through the use of the Rigor/Relevance Framework.

Teachers working in collaborative groups are expected to create projects, activities, and alternative assessments in Quadrant D. An example of an activity that engages 9th grade magnet students in Quadrant D learning is a team-taught technology and English class that requires student teams to participate in authentic community-based research. Teams choose a site that is in danger of extinction by dilapidation, growth, demolition,

or disuse. They work with local museums, universities, and historical societies, and present their findings in multimedia formats to a jury of teachers, students, and community members. The students participate in a real-world process, gain valuable experience, develop their verbal presentation skills, and most important, become active stewards of their community.

Through the Picasso software program, teachers identify instructional activities, strategies, and lessons, including assessments in Quadrant D that relate to the state's performance standards. These standards/lessons are available for all staff throughout the district. This level of integrated instruction and activities requires considerable curriculum coordination. Schools in the district have periodic early-release days to provide teachers with the time to collaborate, discuss, share, and evaluate instructional practices. Teachers also engage in curricular alignment during professional development. In addition, teachers are encouraged to use problem-based learning relating to real-world requirements as an instructional strategy and to create team project assignments. According to students, examples of rigorous and relevant learning activities in academic classes are:

- In an Algebra I class, students make recommendations to their grandparents about whether to accept Social Security payments at age 62 or to defer until age 65.
- In a conceptual physics class (equivalent to physical science), students select, demonstrate, and provide explanations about physics in real life, such as why the first hill on a roller coaster is always the tallest.
- In an interior design class, students create original designs for administrative offices and classrooms, complete with color scheme and accessories.
- In an economics class, students develop an original company and product, then market and sell the product at a special "mall day."
- Students with disabilities run a small business, the Mountain Top Café. The café sells coffee in the morning and customers may pre-order by e-mail.

Several interdisciplinary programs initiated at Kennesaw Mountain are examples of high quality curriculum and instruction. All 9th grade magnet students are enrolled in a team-taught technology and English class that enables students to develop communication skills along with the technology skills needed to function well in today's society. American Studies is another interdisciplinary course that is available to all students; in this course, American Literature is teamed with U.S. History, allowing students to study America's literary past and culture along with the historical events of each era. A new project integrating AP art history with AP world history has been introduced. Although these are two separate courses, students who are enrolled in them do mutual projects and other activities. Last year, a humanities class for the gifted worked with a local author and with social science students from a nearby college on a Harlem Renaissance unit. These students then taught elements of the unit to students at a neighboring middle school.

Students with disabilities who are a part of the school's commitment to rigor and relevance receive support in core classes, in the major academic disciplines, and in optional courses, which include study skills, work study, and reading enrichment. By participating in these programs, students receive community-based instruction/training, in addition to vocational work experience both on and off campus.

One unique program mentioned earlier is the Mountain Top Café, operated by the exceptional students and which provides rigorous and relevant workplace skills. The curriculum used in this program, "Serving Up Success," enables students to learn functional, transitional, and vocational skills via a school-based business. Related vocational instruction (RVI) is provided to support students with special needs in their chosen career technical program. The RVI teacher acts as a liaison to Vocational Rehabilitative Services in the Georgia Department of Labor, provides information regarding postsecondary training, and administers vocational testing.

Underlying all of these programs is the expectation that teachers develop rigorous and relevant lessons for all students. Teachers are highly encouraged to differentiate lessons and assess in a variety of ways, with an emphasis on project-based learning.

Professional Growth and Recognition

A rich variety of professional growth opportunities for staff provide time to collaborate, discuss curriculum coordination, and share and evaluate instructional practices. Teachers also engage in curriculum alignment during these professional development activities. The overall focus is on teachers sharing ideas, communicating, and assisting students to raise cognitive skills by providing rigorous and relevant learning activities.

Exemplary results of professional growth are acknowledged. Students nominate teachers for recognition who seek to promote learning in Quadrant D of the Rigor/Relevance Framework. Each month, students nominate a teacher who has engaged them in higher level thinking and problem-based learning as the “D Quadrant Teacher of the Month.” This program encourages students to recognize and appreciate challenging instruction. The award is presented at the monthly faculty meeting, and the principal reads the students’ reason for the nomination to the entire faculty.

Needs assessments and strategic planning are fundamental strategies for improvement in any organization. Various planning models have been used in schools over the years. The International Center has developed a unique approach to needs assessment and strategic planning; the process described here is the service provided by the International Center for schools desiring to make deliberate improvements in student achievement.

Needs Assessment

The purpose of the Needs Assessment conducted by the International Center is to bring administrators and teachers together as a team to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the school and to make decisions on how to bring about needed improvements in the classroom and in the school as a whole. The Needs Assessment is a school-focused process that operates on the belief that improving teaching and learning is a continuous effort that requires open and objective dialogue in a professional and nonthreatening environment. The process incorporates the International Center’s Learning Criteria to Support 21st Century Learners and the Components of School Excellence.

Needs Assessment and Strategic Planning

The Needs Assessment is a school-focused process that operates on the belief that improving teaching and learning is a continuous effort that requires open and objective dialogue in a professional and nonthreatening environment.

An important component of the International Center's Needs Assessment process is the development of a School Data Profile prior to an onsite visit. The profile provides a comprehensive analysis of student achievement data, student participation data, student subgroup data, college readiness indicators, demographic data, and school characteristics to identify strengths and potential areas of need. The profile will identify trends in student performance over time and, where possible, present school data and performance compared to similar schools and state averages.

Information typically collected and analyzed in the data profile includes, but is not limited to:

- student/school demographics
- standardized test results
- graduation rates
- attendance rates
- dropout rates
- discipline referrals/suspension rates
- SAT/ACT participation rates
- percentage of students continuing education
- dual credit participation
- AP/IB course participation

The International Center also administers student and faculty surveys to help assess how both groups perceive the quality of instruction and the learning environment of the school. The survey questions are organized around the components of rigor, relevance, and relationships.

The Needs Assessment is not an evaluation. Rather, it is designed to guide a school's staff through a journey of self-renewal.

The Needs Assessment is not an evaluation. Rather, it is designed to guide a school's staff through a journey of self-renewal. Information is gathered through a series of classroom observations, interviews, and surveys, resulting in a report that will be shared with staff, who will review the data and comment on its accuracy. Modifications will be made as necessary. The primary purposes of the visit are to:

- develop an accurate Needs Assessment Report that identifies school strengths and critical challenges

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- make specific recommendations that address critical challenges
- focus and prioritize key actions that will drive the development of an Individualized Action Plan for the school

The visit is organized by the principal and structured as a guided tour of the school's practices and programs. It provides opportunities to meet with a variety of school leaders (administrators, faculty, and students) to discuss programs in detail and learn as much as possible about the characteristics and practices of the school.

Strategic Planning

Based on data analysis and the Needs Assessment Report, the International Center will assist in the development of an individualized action plan (IAP) for all schools involved in the process. Strategic planning will consist of three days of work by the school leadership team with an International Center School senior consultant who will facilitate a process to:

- create consensus around priority goals
- develop strategic action plans for each priority goal
- align priority goals to the school performance goals of your state

The strategic planning process empowers school leadership teams to build broad-based support for priority goals and to develop an IAP for continuous school improvement. The process also helps school leadership teams understand the Learning Criteria and the Components of School Excellence as methods to measure school success and build the capacity in order to implement whole school reform.

Tools for Needs Assessment and Strategic Planning

The following tools are provided to assist with needs assessment and strategic planning:

- Learning Criteria Rubric
- Components of School Excellence
- Sample Strategic Plan and Data Summary



Learning Criteria to Support 21st Century Learners Rubric

Foundation Learning — Achievement in the foundation subjects of English language arts, math and science, and others identified by the school.					
	Exemplary	Very Good	Acceptable	Approaching Acceptable	Needs Improvement
Student performance in Foundation Learning is expressed in objective terms					
The school has met AYP requirements in foundation subjects for total students for several years					
There is no significant difference in student performance across subgroups					
School makes benchmarked comparisons for Foundation Learning with schools that are similar in focus, community, and structure					
Students are able to progress to the next level of school without the need to additional instruction in foundation subjects					
Achievement data reflects increasing or sustained performance at high levels for several years					
Staff fully understand the indicators for Foundation Learning and can relate their work to achievement in the indicators					
All staff have access to and understanding of school performance data in Foundation Learning					
School has objective goals and timelines for academic achievement					
Students with disabilities meet Foundation Learning requirements					

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Stretch Learning — Demonstration of rigorous and relevant learning beyond minimum requirements (participation and achievement in higher level courses, specialized courses, etc.).					
	Exemplary	Very Good	Acceptable	Approaching Acceptable	Needs Improvement
Student performance in Stretch Learning is expressed in objective terms					
School has trend data that reflects sustained performance at high levels for several years					
Staff fully understand the indicators for Stretch Learning and can relate their work to achievement in the indicators					
Majority of instruction is high rigor and high relevance — Quadrant D of the Rigor/Relevance Framework					
Local diploma requirements exceed those required by the state					
Students regularly exceed diploma requirements in credits earned					
Interdisciplinary work and projects (e.g., senior exhibitions) are common among all students					
Students earn college credits prior to graduation (dual enrollment)					
Enrollments are high in Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate programs					
Enrollments are high in honors or advanced math or science courses					
Student population subgroups are equally represented in advanced level courses					
Students complete career majors or career/technical education programs					
Students are completing four or more credits in a career and technical education program					
Students are completing four or more credits in fine/performing arts					
Students are completing three or more years of a second language					
Students are awarded specialized certificates (e.g., Microsoft, Cisco Academy)					
Students with disabilities are served in regular education classes with support services as necessary					

Learner Engagement — Data, structures, and conditions that reflect: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ positive behaviors that indicate full participation in the learning process by students, but also by administrative and teaching staffs ▶ students' and the staff's sense of satisfaction, belonging, security, and accomplishment ▶ a motivated commitment to learning, now and in the future 					
	Exemplary	Very Good	Acceptable	Approaching Acceptable	Needs Improvement
Student measures of Learner Engagement are expressed in objective terms					
School has trend data that reflects sustained or high levels of Learner Engagement for several years					
Staff fully understands the indicators for Learner Engagement and can relate their work to achievement in the indicators					
There is no significant difference in performance across subgroups					
The school has developed benchmarked comparisons for Learner Engagement with like groups of schools in focus, community, and structure					
Students in class show positive body language, are focused, verbally participate, and show confidence and enthusiasm for learning					
Students in class receive individual attention, can describe intended learning, feel work is meaningful, demonstrate higher-level thinking and are committed to doing quality work					
School has high level of retention (low dropout rate)					
School has high level of daily attendance					
School has high graduation rates					
School has few discipline referrals					
School has high participation rates in extracurricular activities					
School has high participation rate in interscholastic sports					
School has high enrollment in higher education					
School has few tardiness problems					



Personal Skill Development ▶ Measures of personal, social, service, and leadership skills ▶ Demonstrations of positive behaviors and attitudes					
	Exemplary	Very Good	Acceptable	Approaching Acceptable	Needs Improvement
Student measures of Personal Skill Development are expressed in objective terms					
School has trend data that reflects sustained performance at high levels for several years					
Staff fully understand the indicators for Personal Skill Development and can relate their work to achievement in the indicators					
There is no significant difference in student performance across subgroups					
Students demonstrate self management including perseverance, time management, and the ability to plan and set goals, organize work, and control emotions.					
Students demonstrate social awareness through concern for others, assisting others in various social issues, respect for diversity, and/or participation in service learning					
Students demonstrate social facility including respect for others, communicating opinions and ideas, resolving conflict, trustworthiness, following group norms, and working as members of a team					
Students demonstrate a sense of belonging to the school community					
Students demonstrate curiosity and creativity in learning					
Students develop leadership skills through responsibilities in the school and school-related activities					
Students possess the confidence to take action in their personal lives and learning					



Component of School Excellence	
1.	Embrace a Common Vision and Goals — Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships for All Students. Schools, like any organization that seeks to improve, must have a common vision shared by all. Everyone must be committed to shared goals to measure success, and staff must have the same perspective as to what it is important in the organization.
2.	Inform Decisions through Data Systems. Whole-school/district reform is a continuous process guided by a well-developed data structure based on multiple measures of student learning. Highly successful schools/districts use quality data to make laser-like decisions about curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
3.	Empower Leadership Teams to Take Action and Innovate. Schools that will be most successful in the 21 st century are led by individuals who possess skills and attitudes to take action rather than defend the status quo. Leadership does not reside in a single position but reflects the attributes, skills, and attitudes of the many staff members who take action and improve through effective learning communities.
4.	Clarify Student Learning Expectations. Inconsistent state standards, tests, and community expectations create a wide-ranging and jumbled assortment of curricula, instructional practices, and classroom materials as well as varying expectations for rigor within and across grade levels. When districts take steps to clarify what students are expected to learn, they meet with success in improving student achievement.
5.	Adopt Effective Instructional Practices. More than high test scores, successful instructional practices include having a wide range of strategies and tools to meet the needs of diverse learners in all disciplines and grade levels. Success in achieving state standards results from not teaching in routine and proscriptive methods but from selecting successful instructional practices to meet the needs of all students.
6.	Adapt Organizational Structures. Organizational structure should be determined by instructional needs. Only after a comprehensive review of instructional practices should schools begin to address the issues of organization such as school schedules, use of time, unique learning opportunities, school calendars, and physical structure.
7.	Monitor Progress/Improve Support Systems. Highly successful programs recognize the need to monitor student progress on a regular basis. Successful schools use formative assessments in an organized, deliberate, and ongoing fashion to monitor student progress. Further, they use this data immediately to adjust instructional practices and intervene to meet student needs.
8.	Refine Process on an Ongoing Basis. High-performing schools realize that success is a continuing and ever-changing course of action. This step in the process, in fact, should reinvigorate the process and cause school leaders to look at new and emerging challenges and explore potential solutions and successful practices from around the country.



International Center for Leadership in Education

Individualized Action Plan

Priority Goal 3:

Rexford H.S. will reduce its 2007 dropout rate of 13.9% by 20% and 20% in each grade level.

Rationale:

As a result of a number of factors, a large number of students enter Rexford H.S. with skill deficiencies in key areas. These deficiencies have resulted in a larger than acceptable level of students who leave Rexford H.S. before obtaining a high school diploma. Given the increasing need for students to continue some form of education beyond the secondary level, the Rexford school leaders and staff have determined that the percentage of students who leave Rexford without a high school diploma must be reduced.

Growth Target:

For the 2008-09 school year, the school dropout rate will be reduced in each grade level by 20%.

Action	Benchmark(s)	Person(s) Responsible	Expenditures
Create support system for struggling students.	Identify key components of support systems like "Failure Is Not an Option."	Grisham/Stockfleth	\$1000
	Determine key components of the Rexford H.S. support system.	Grisham/Stockfleth	
	Identify initial target groups – i.e., 9 th grade only, "bubble" students, weak students.	Saragusa	
	Staff training re: rationale for support systems. Staff training for implementation of support strategies.	Fussell	
	Draft/develop and implement support system.	Grisham/Stockfleth	
	Include recognition system from previous goals to support this action.	Model Schools Committee (Cherame and Bancroft)	

Timeline and PD Needs:

At-risk incoming 10th graders for 2008-09 school year. Schoolwide for 2009-10.

International Center for Leadership in Education Services and Resources:

ICLE transition/support PowerPoints; ICLE Resource Kit – "Support for Struggling Students"

Action	Benchmark(s)	Person(s) Responsible	Expenditures
Create aggressive transition programming for incoming 9 th grade students.	Look at model programs -- i.e., 9 th grade academies, 9 th grade teacher teams, transitional data analysis, etc. by Aug 2008.	Moore/Fussell	\$1000
	Identify "bubble" students – i.e., those at greatest risk of failure, those in need of intensive attention, etc. by start of school 2008.	Saragusa/Gaydos	



International Center for Leadership in Education

	Identify intervention actions to be implemented with incoming 9 th graders by Aug 2008.	Grisham/Stockfleth	
	Develop individual, personalized plans for all incoming 9 th graders in conjunction with counselors at h.s. and junior h.s. by Aug 2008	Moore/Fussell	
	Create adult contact for all incoming 9 th graders using TOR family structure.	Fussell	
Timeline and PD Needs: Presentation to staff re: need for creating a climate of high expectations for all, along with the ways in which the transitional program can drive this goal.			
International Center for Leadership in Education Services and Resources: Utilize ICLE Resource Kit – Reinventing 9 th Grade... use ICLE transitional PowerPoints from Rich Ten Eyck.			

Classroom walk-throughs are specific, short observations in classrooms that are conducted by school administrators, instructional coaches, or external consultants. Classroom walk-throughs are not a traditional supervisory evaluation of the teacher. Rather, they are shorter snapshots that focus on a specific instructional practice. An individual or a team of educators may conduct them. Walk-throughs should be introduced after all staff involved fully understand their purpose and expectations. Teachers who will be observed are contacted beforehand, and the criteria and specific observations that will be examined are explained so that teachers understand what administrators or coaches will be looking for.

Classroom Walk-Throughs

Leadership Strategies

All walk-throughs should have a common set of criteria. The purpose of this activity is not to evaluate the teacher, but to make classroom observations and talk to students to obtain specific information about the level of engagement. During a walk-through, the observer should avoid disturbing the classroom lesson. Once walk-throughs are common practice, teachers and students will accept them as routine.

As an observation begins, a brief quiz to the teacher or students may help to obtain background information about what the students are learning at that particular time. Since the observation is not an evaluation, observers make no judgments nor give any feedback to students or the teacher. The focus should be on students and the work they are doing.

A good rule of thumb is to conduct walk-throughs in classrooms once or twice a week.

After a walk-through, debriefings should be arranged, and handled in two ways. If the intent were *to determine the overall status of instruction in a school*, the debriefing would be for the entire group of staff members without making references to individual teachers. If the feedback or observation is intended *to coach individual teachers after observing how they conducted their classrooms*, then it is important to meet with these teachers individually to discuss the observations made during the walk-through.

Walk-throughs should not be surprising events. Teachers should be well-informed that they will occur and what the focus is for, but observations do not need to be by invitation or appointment. Walk-throughs and observations should be common ways of providing instruction in a school.

Tools for Classroom Walk-Throughs

A variety of classroom walk-through tools is provided:

- **Student Engagement Walk-Through Checklist:**
This checklist looks at students and their level of engagement.
- **Collaborative Classroom Review:**
This form includes characteristics of rigor and relevance, good instruction and student engagement.



Student Engagement Walk-Through Checklist

OBSERVATIONS

	Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Positive Body Language	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students exhibit body postures that indicate they are paying attention to the teacher and/or other students.					
Consistent Focus	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
All students are focused on the learning activity with minimum disruptions.					
Verbal Participation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students express thoughtful ideas, reflective answers, and questions relevant or appropriate to learning.					
Student Confidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students exhibit confidence and can initiate and complete a task with limited coaching and can work in a group.					
Fun and Excitement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students exhibit interest and enthusiasm and use positive humor.					



PERCEPTIONS

	Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Individual Attention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Students feel comfortable seeking help and asking questions.

Question to Ask: What do you do in this class if you need extra help?

Clarity of Learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Students can describe the purpose of the lesson or unit. This is not the same as being able to describe the activity being done during class.

Questions to Ask: What are you working on? What are you learning from this work?

Meaningfulness of Work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Students find the work interesting, challenging, and connected to learning.

Questions to Ask: What are you learning? Is this work interesting to you? Do you know why you are learning this?

Rigorous Thinking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Students work on complex problems, create original solutions, and reflect on the quality of their work.

Questions to Ask: How challenging is this work? In what ways do you have the opportunity to be creative?

Performance Orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Students understand what quality work is and how it will be assessed. They also can describe the criteria by which their work will be evaluated.

Questions to Ask: How do you know you have done good work? What are some elements of quality work?

Overall Level of Student Engagement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Collaborative Instructional Review

School Name: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Duration: _____

Teacher: _____

		Low	Below Average	Average	Above Average	High	Evidence to Support Rating
Learner Engagement							
Intensity	Positive body language, focus, verbal participation, student confidence, and excitement						
Breadth	Degree to which all students are engaged						
Consistency	Consistency of engagement through time observed						
Evidence of Rigor							
Thinking	Students are expected to reflect, research, analyze, or summarize						
Verbal responses	Students are expected to give thoughtful responses that demonstrate understanding						
Work	Student work requires, creativity, originality, design, or adaptation						
Evidence of Relevance							
Work	Student work is a real world product or presentation done under real-world conditions						

Instructional Leadership — Quadrant D Leadership Practices

		Low	Below Average	Average	Above Average	High	Evidence to Support Rating
Resources	Students use real-world resources in completing work						
Assessment	Quality of work is judged on real-world authentic measures						

		Low	Below Average	Average	Above Average	High	N/A	Evidence to Support Rating
Literacy								
Reading	Collect data, facts, ideas from written and electronic sources; analyze experiences, ideas, and information presented by others							
Writing	Use written language for self-expression, to transmit information, to effectively communicate							
Speaking	Use oral language for self-expression, to transmit information, to effectively communicate							
Listening	Collect data, facts, ideas from oral and electronic sources; analyze experiences, ideas, and information presented by others							

Correlation to Standard(s)		Yes	No	Evidence to Support Rating
Curriculum	Objective of lesson relates to standard, content is aligned, and appropriate to grade level			
Instruction	Methodologies used will achieve standard, lesson is differentiated and accessible for all students			
Assessment	Formative assessment aligned with standard/objective			

Overall Rating of Rigor and Relevance		Please check the overall quadrant rating.	
Quadrant A	Teacher centered, student recall and comprehension, memorization, no application of learning		
Quadrant B	High application, students working independently or in groups, interdisciplinary and real-world		
Quadrant C	High level thinking and reflection, summarizing, analyzing, student original work, school based problems		
Quadrant D	Challenging real world problems, student design, creativity, original solutions, real world products		

Professional Development Workshops

Workshops are a poor form of professional development, but sometimes they are the best methodology that can be used. Workshops assume that every staff member needs exactly the same new skills and knowledge, all have the same prior knowledge about a subject, and all learn in exactly the same way. Too often, workshops are given in a lecture mode. For all these reasons, workshops are rated low on a scale of professional development options.

However, workshops persist in spite of their ineffectiveness. They are efficient, relatively easy to plan, and low in cost. Organizers just invite a speaker and put staff in a large room and let the information disseminate while a little (very little) professional learning begins. Workshops are also easy because state requirements or local employee contracts often specify non-instructional days for professional development. Because schools have students that must be constantly supervised, it is difficult to pull teachers away from their work for professional development.

Workshops are not going away soon because the efficiencies of the workshop fit nicely with the limited time and resources available for professional learning in education. Workshops are easy to quantify and keep track of by simply counting how many hours or days staff spent in workshops. Administrators can also be sure that everyone has been exposed to new information, even if they have not learned anything.

Workshops are not a total waste as a professional development activity and there are leadership strategies that will help to make them as effective as possible.

Leadership Strategies

Many schools are locked into contractual days for professional development. While these days are not the best structure for effective, ongoing professional learning, they are a critical resource for sustaining professional development. Following are some suggestions for making the most of professional development days.

Avoid the all-day speaker. Bringing in experts to provide high quality presentations and offer unique insights, inspiration, and research can contribute to valuable professional development. However, try to avoid

Use the expert presenter for only a few hours of the day and plan other types of professional learning around that presentation.

committing speakers for a full day. It usually costs the same for a half day versus a full day and you may feel you want to get all of the expertise you can from a presenter, but the overload of information from a full-day presentation is more than most staff can absorb. Use the expert presenter for only a few hours of the day and plan other types of professional learning around that presentation.

Facilitate discussions. One way to extend professional learning from an outside expert is to have discussion groups following a presentation. Structure deliberate discussion around staff groups. It might be beneficial to have teachers grouped by grade level or by subject area who have a common interest. However, it might also be more effective to have interdisciplinary groups discussing issues and sharing ideas.

A pre-reading assignment with a specific article could be good preparation and development of background for both a presentation or discussion group.

In full-day workshops, be sure to differentiate elementary, middle, and high school staff. While there are many topics that cut across all grade levels, most teachers desire hearing examples that directly relate to their teaching level. A significant portion of any staff development day is best devoted to teachers with a common instructional responsibility.

Use your own staff as part of a presentation. Selected staff may have participated in intensive professional development or attended conferences, or may possess unique expertise. These individuals are often in a better position to connect new learning to the specific needs of the school and staff. Don't overlook using local experts to provide professional learning. Using local teachers in combination with an outside expert connects them with an external resource.

The professional development day could also be conducted in a train-the-trainer mode. Well in advance of the professional development day, have a select group of staff trained extensively, perhaps by an expert. This group of trainers then organizes the staff development day, including a series of presentation activities and discussions, which would be highly engaging for staff. Large staffs can be broken into smaller groups to increase the level of engagement.

Consider off-site locations. Staff come to school every day and know the facility very well. Having professional development days as part of their normal routine in a school cafeteria or auditorium is not likely to generate new information or ideas. While it is more cost-effective to use existing school facilities, more successful professional development activities can be held at a unique off-site location. An ideal professional learning environment includes roundtables for staff, which facilitate small group discussion. Usually school facilities lack this kind of facility that is conducive to high quality presentations and discussions. Consider hotels and conference facilities for improved professional learning. In any facility, provide comfortable chairs, enough space for people to move around the room, and adequate food and refreshments.

Make sure people get to know one another. If outside presenters are used, make sure they are briefed about the staff. Encourage them to include introductory activities to learn more about the individual staff and for them to get to know one another. If the school or district is large, use the professional development day to help staff to know one another. Improved relationships and knowledge of one another creates a stronger foundation for learning during the day and in subsequent activities.

Design engaging openings and reflective endings. In organizing any activity, plan for an exciting beginning. First impressions are important, so make sure that the day starts with an engaging activity or fun and enjoyable experience. The end of the day should also build toward a reflective climax in which staff could, for example, complete a product, make recommendations, or write thoughts for follow up, any of which could bring the day to a fitting closure.

Base workshops on needs. In selecting the topics for full-day professional development, base the design of the content on the needs assessment of the staff and staff suggestions. Rather than selecting a common topic for all staff to hear, identify several different topics in which staff would have their choice. Staff will have more interest in sessions in which they get to choose a topic related to their interests.

Staff will have more interest in sessions in which they get to choose a topic related to their interests.

When conducting a needs assessment however, the topics for professional learning are not a popularity contest in which staff get to select the topics that most interest them. These topics might not have a direct correlation with student achievement and may be simply professional topics that individuals wish to explore.

When conducting a needs assessment, keep the identification of needs focused on student achievement. It may be more effective to hold several focus groups in which teachers get to discuss their school and individual needs in order to plan professional learning, rather than having an anonymous list or ranking of topics. It is also important to dig for root causes or symptoms within a school. Sometimes it is too simple to select a particular program or solution to address poor student engagement or poor attendance. The solution to these problems may be much more complex than any specific program or piece of information. The planning team for professional learning should use a systematic, root cause analysis to identify the fundamental staff needs that can influence the observed symptom or problem. This process will result in more thoughtful professional development and potentially ongoing professional development in which each day is a part of a series of activities.

The strategies that will make workshops as productive as possible include planning based on needs, teacher choice, use of adult learning principles, evaluation, teacher reflection, and follow up.

Tools for Professional Development Workshops

The following tools are provided to assist in staff development:

- Determining Staff Needs for Professional Learning
- Tips for Adult Learning
- Evaluation Questions
- If Not a Workshop, Then What?



Determining Staff Needs for Professional Learning

Ask each teacher who will be participating in a staff development day to provide the following information. This exercise will indicate to the staff that you expect them to think deeply in advance about what they will learn and it will signal that you want them to base their learning on the needs of their students.

I want to...	Topics of Study	How this will impact your students?
Improve my knowledge of...	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
Improve my skills in...	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
Develop or create...	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
Work with my colleagues on...	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
Study ways to...	1.	
	2.	
	3.	



Tips for Adult Learning

- ▶ **Adults are experienced.** Even if a workshop is introducing something new, do not forget that adults have considerable knowledge. As the teacher, tap their experience through thoughtful questions and small group conversations. Connect what they already know to the new information. Build on their experience.
- ▶ **Adults have established values, beliefs, and opinions.** Respect individuals for differing beliefs, religions, value systems, and lifestyles. Everyone in the room may not share their beliefs, but respect differences, and keep any debate focused on ideas and not personal values and beliefs.
- ▶ **Adults style and pace of learning are unique.** Use a variety of teaching strategies, such as small group problem solving and discussion. Use auditory, visual, tactile, and participatory teaching methods. Most adults prefer teaching methods other than lecture. Individual differences among people increase with age. Take into account differences in style, time, types, and pace of learning.
- ▶ **Adults relate new knowledge and information to previously learned information and experiences.** Assess the specific learning needs of your audience before your class or at the beginning of the class. Don't assume! Summarize frequently to increase retention and recall. Keep instruction related to their work; material outside of the context of participants' experiences and knowledge becomes meaningless.
- ▶ **Adults tend to have a problem-centered orientation to learning.** Emphasize how learning can be applied in a practical setting. Use case studies, problem-solving groups, and participatory activities to enhance learning. Adults generally want to apply new information or skills to current problems or situations immediately.
- ▶ **Adults are people with bodies influenced by gravity.** Plan frequent breaks, even if they are two-minute "stretch" breaks. During a lecture, have conversations or reflections that cause adults to move and talk every 20-30 minutes. Have them physically stand and move every 45-60 minutes.
- ▶ **Adults have pride.** Support the students as individuals. Self-esteem and ego are at risk in a classroom environment that is not perceived as safe or supportive. People will not ask questions or participate in learning if they are afraid of being put down or ridiculed. Allow people to admit confusion, ignorance, fears, biases, and different opinions. Acknowledge or thank students for their responses and questions. Treat all questions and comments with respect. Avoid saying, "I just covered that" when someone asks a repetitive question. Remember, the only foolish question is the unasked question.
- ▶ **Adults have a deep need to be self-directing.** Engage the students in a process of mutual inquiry. Avoid merely transmitting knowledge or expecting total agreement. Don't "spoon-feed" the participants.



Evaluation Questions

Reaction to Professional Learning

- ▶ Is feedback from participants important?
- ▶ Will any feedback include reaction to: purpose, content, quality of outside consultants, process, facility, timing, follow up, or suggestions for changes?
- ▶ Who will review participant feedback?
- ▶ Who will the feedback be shared with?

Evidence of Professional Learning

- ▶ Will staff be evaluated on what they have learned?
- ▶ What evidence will be collected to determine if learning occurred?

Evidence of Changes in Instruction

- ▶ What impact is the professional development expected to have on instruction?
- ▶ Are staff aware of the expected impact on instruction?
- ▶ How will you measure whether professional development has had an impact on instruction?
- ▶ Who will collect data on the effectiveness of the evaluation?
- ▶ What is the timeframe for the evaluation?

Evidence of Results

- ▶ What is expected in changes to student achievement or behavior?
- ▶ What is the timeline for collecting any evidence in changes in student achievement or behavior?

Evidence of Cost/Benefit

- ▶ What evidence will be used to determine the benefit for the cost of professional learning?



If Not a Workshop, Then What?

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Conducting action research projects | 25. Observing model lessons |
| 2. Analyzing teaching cases | 26. Reading journals, education magazines, books |
| 3. Attending awareness-level seminars | 27. Participating in a critical friends group |
| 4. Joining a cadre of in-house trainers | 28. Doing a self-assessment |
| 5. Planning lessons with a teaching colleague | 29. Shadowing another teacher or professional in the field |
| 6. Consulting an expert | 30. Keeping a reflective log or journal |
| 7. Examining student data | 31. Analyzing the expectations of statewide assessments |
| 8. Being coached by a peer or an expert | 32. Enrolling in a university course |
| 9. Leading a book study | 33. Viewing education videos |
| 10. Making a field trip | 34. Maintaining a professional portfolio |
| 11. Writing assessments with a colleague | 35. Studying state content standards |
| 12. Participating in a study or support group | 36. Observing other teachers teach |
| 13. Doing a classroom walk-through | 37. Listening to video/audio recordings |
| 14. Giving presentations at conferences | 38. Participating in a videoconference |
| 15. Researching on the Internet | 39. Working on a strategic planning team conference calls with experts |
| 16. Leading a schoolwide committee or project | 40. Visiting model schools/programs |
| 17. Developing displays, bulletin boards | 41. Developing curriculum |
| 18. Shadowing students | 42. Doing school improvement planning |
| 19. Coaching a colleague | 43. Examining new technological resources to supplement lessons |
| 20. Being a mentor or being mentored | 44. Being observed and receiving feedback from another teacher or principal |
| 21. Joining a professional network | 45. Participating in lesson study |
| 22. Using a tuning protocol to examine student work | |
| 23. Attending an indepth institute in a content area | |
| 24. Writing an article about your work | |

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Case Study of Elmira City Schools

Elmira City Schools, in Elmira, N.Y., is an example of a district that effectively used professional development workshops as part of significant school improvement.

Elmira City Schools, a district of 7,400 students in the New York southern tier, is typical of large urban districts with persistent achievement needs and concerns, particularly the district's two middle schools. Although the district's mission statement clearly reads, "All students succeed," this statement was not inspiring desired student achievement results to meet state performance targets. In fact, both Ernie Davis Middle School, named after the famed Syracuse University football, and Broadway Middle School had not been meeting state achievement targets for quite some time — six and seven years, respectively. Middle school students were struggling on the English language arts assessment, prompting both schools to be named to NCLB's list of schools that are in need of improvement.

Student performance was not acceptable to anyone — the faculty, students, administrators, parents, or community members. It appeared that pressure from outside the schools and from the district office had no impact on the middle schools. Both faculties would have to initiate needed reform in their schools to change outcomes for students, as well as the perception the community had of its middle schools. Teachers believed that they could not influence student achievement to the degree needed to move the schools off of the "The List." Teachers were not empowered to make critical changes in curriculum, instruction, or assessment. Both schools' staffs were fragmented. Staffs were not working together — within their grade levels or between schools — to create any consistency in planning, delivery, and assessment of instruction. Both schools avoided taking risks and had no strategies or support to encourage analyzing data, learning from each other, or identifying high-yield professional development.

During this struggle, district office turnover was high; a new superintendent was hired from out-of-state in March 2005 and a reorganization of the district office was imminent. A new assistant superintendent joined the district in April 2006. At the same time, the administrative teams at both middle schools were turning over. In fact, both principals were hired in

July 2006 — their first principalship. Soon thereafter, three assistant principals were hired at each school. Therefore, all eight administrators between the middle schools were in their first year as a principal, first year as an assistant principal or first year in middle level administration; not one administrator had been in the building as an administrator. Additionally, over 45% of the faculty at the middle schools had fewer than three years of experience. Moving the middle schools forward was a daunting task.

The Journey — Building a Comprehensive Professional Development Plan

For a full week during the summer of 2007, the superintendent and the assistant superintendent hosted the district's first annual Instructional Leadership Week. The purpose of the week was to provide uninterrupted time for school leaders to meet and reflect on student achievement data from the prior year, analyze the data and develop a school-specific reform plan — complimented with the strategic professional development plan — to move the schools forward for the following year.

The invitation list to Instructional Leadership Week included:

- all administrators (45 throughout the district)
- department chairs/grade level team leaders (20 from the middle and high schools)
- instructional support teachers (ISTs) (14 throughout the district)
- special education and reading staff (10 from the elementary schools)

Through a series of workshops, keynote presentations, school/group activities, and individual data reflection, each school identified its key focus areas and created its 2007-08 school reform plan. The reform plan also included a comprehensive professional development plan, based solely on its achievement data.

For over 25 hours during the course of Instructional Leadership Week, school teams drilled through their achievement data behind closed doors, enabling them to reflect, analyze, and develop themes for the upcoming year. Each school devised unique plans; both middle school teams began with the goal of increasing achievement in English language arts, via writing strategies and high-yield instructional strategies. With the

Instructional Leadership — Quadrant D Leadership Practices

support of the district's Data Team, special education leadership, and other personnel, teams requested data disaggregated by subgroup, attendance, discipline, and teacher in order to draw comparisons, and identify trends and priorities of the support staff.

Although each middle school was encouraged to develop its own reform plan, it was difficult not to draw comparisons and similarities between the two schools. Perhaps for the first time since NCLB and both schools being on "The List," they understood that the achievement data could drive one succinct, comprehensive, and detailed professional development plan between both schools. Both school teams were also required to include three non-negotiable essential elements of the professional development plan.

Workshops that Focus on Real Needs

Traditional professional development workshops in the district were typically face-to-face presentations with hands-on experiences. The focus now turned toward specific, research-based instructional strategies tailored to meet the needs of the students at both middle schools in the most effective way possible. The schools adopted the work of Robert Marzano, focusing heavily on classroom organizational and instructional strategies. As the schools unrolled this targeted, poignant professional development, they experienced greater teacher support and buy-in since the teachers were experiencing immediate results. Strategies now became the main topic of administrative walk-throughs and look-fors. In short, strategies that had been discussed and supported in professional development workshops were now immediately followed up and commented upon by administrators.

Sustained and Shared Professional Development

Each of the 13 schools has a full-time instructional support teacher (IST) devoted to providing and supporting the professional development. Best dubbed as a master teacher, the IST is a certified teacher who works closely with the principal and Leadership Team to help implement the plans for professional development. The IST accomplishes implementation primarily by researching best practices that turn the written plan into an action plan, i.e., delivering the activities that support the plans. The IST also serves as a mentor and critical friend to staff by co-teaching, modeling strategies, co-planning, and observing instruction to provide insight and suggestions from a practitioner's viewpoint.

By using achievement data, professional development decision making was fluid, predictable, and articulate.

Rigorous and Relevant Professional Development

As a result, emotions were removed from the identification process as school teams identified and contemplated high-yield professional development. Perhaps most important was the involvement of teachers in generating the plan. By involving staff at the grassroots level, administrators felt extremely comfortable presenting their plans to the faculty at-large when school opened in September. The involvement of all parties was critical to sharing ownership and executing the professional development plan.

After reflecting with both middle school teams after Leadership Week, it was clear that the process of developing the reform and a professional development plan that involved participants was effective and relevant. Through this process, however, the participants identified potential pitfalls and praise for replicating such a process.

Professional Development Planning Dos and Don'ts

- ***Don't take data personally.*** Use student achievement data as an icebreaker and opportunity to engage in department-specific or whole school discussion regarding how to change outcomes. For the most part, what's happened has happened; last year's results cannot be changed. Those results can, however, be used to gauge action steps, identify teacher supports, and create meaningful opportunities to strengthen the system to maximize student results.
- ***Do ask for staff feedback regularly.*** Collaboration in creating the professional development plan is ongoing. The school team can still meet and reflect regularly on professional development feedback. The plan needs to be fluid and dynamic, be adaptable to changes in student needs and demographics, and incorporate feedback mechanisms to ensure planning, perception, and experience are in concert.
- ***Do commit to classroom walk-throughs and give feedback to everyone.*** What gets measured is what gets done. Follow up regularly on professional development workshops by being increasingly visible in the instructional settings, providing immediate feedback to teachers, and identifying additional needs for the school that are based on these relevant experiences.

- ***Don't let the use of data break the trust with staff.*** Achievement data is — or at least should be — public information. Schools use report cards, quizzes, unit exams, and written assessments to gauge progress over a period of time. Similar data should be used for planning effective professional development. Without sharing and reflecting upon data, schools run the risk of planning professional development that is based on feel, not fact.
- ***Do share the creation of the school's professional development plan.*** Many teachers believe they are proficient. With a changing demographic, increasing student needs, and sobering brain research focusing on engagement and technology, no one principal can script the perfect professional development plan. Involving staff is essential to create buy-in, establish a commitment to the plan, and garner support from the trenches in order to reach students effectively and ultimately to change outcomes for students.

Though change is difficult and uncomfortable, school leadership clearly understands that the need for change far outweighs the obstacles to change. The staff have bought the Leadership Team's recommendations into the reform and reinvention efforts; reinventions came from within, and were based on data. As the continued reform efforts unfold, student achievement continues to climb. For the middle schools that had the greatest needs, they saw dramatic improvement. Both schools made AYP in 2006-07 for all students and all subgroups. Additionally, these successes have caught the attention of New York State Education Department officials. Inquiries, school visits, and phone conferences, focused on the turnaround in middle school achievement, are commonplace. Teachers are proud again, the community is behind the school, and the administrative support — within the school and from the district — is prevalent and consistent. Joseph Hochreiter, the new assistant superintendent who led the effort, was appointed Superintendent of Elmira City Schools in fall 2009.

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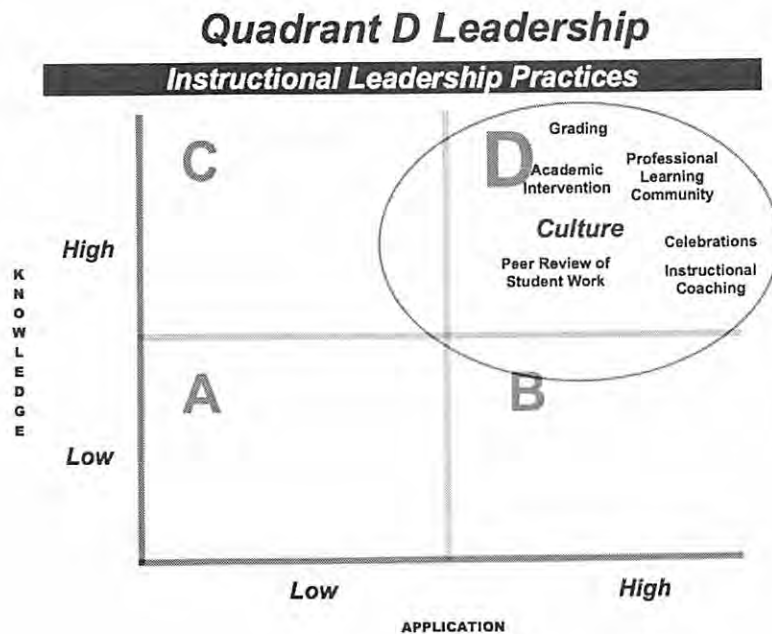
Chapter 9

Culture Practices

Leaders who apply the practices that comprise the four quadrants of the Quadrant D Leadership Framework are working toward establishing a culture that supports significant and sustainable improvement. The use of the practices that are associated with Quadrant D reflect high levels of knowledge and the application of leadership.

Culture practices include:

- Academic intervention
- Instructional coaching
- Peer review of student work
- Grading
- Celebrations
- Professional learning community



Academic Intervention

Ensuring that every student succeeds frequently requires intervention in order to provide personalized and timely alternative instruction. The actual intervention may take many different forms. It may simply mean making adjustments to better engage a student or allowing more time for an alternative learning approach. Additional teachers or an alternative program may sometimes be the most effective intervention.

When examining intervention services, administrators need to consider students with disabilities and English language learners. Students in these groups frequently require supplemental services to be successful. With supplemental funding available for some of these students, federal and state regulations come into play, and states and districts may also have their own regulations that prescribe intervention for students who are performing at low levels on state assessments. Academic intervention is a complicated practice, yet a very important one.

Leadership Strategies

Successful implementation of an intervention philosophy and program requires instructional leadership; it is one of the cultural practices. If schools are committed to the success of all students, a flexible approach to learning is key, for all students do not learn in the same way or at the same speed. One or more academic intervention strategies may be necessary for students to succeed. To some people, academic intervention means instruction that takes place outside the classroom, such as tutoring or special classes. However, many academic interventions need to occur directly *inside* the regular classroom.

The timing of intervention services is critical to student success. Sometimes general education classroom teachers wait until they reach a point of frustration before speaking out to request that a student be removed. At this point, the student is a discouraged learner as well. In other situations, teachers are too quick to remove students who perform poorly or who can't succeed because of their disability. Some teachers may even resist placing any students with disabilities in their classroom. Still other teachers may refer students for alternative placement when they have not even tried preventative or differentiated strategies in the classroom. There are as many different intervention situations as there are teachers and students. It is difficult to prescribe a limited number of interventions that will always work. From a leadership perspective, there are several systemic initiatives to increase the likelihood that education professionals will make the right choices in providing appropriate and timely intervention services that will enable each student to succeed.

There are as many different intervention situations as there are teachers and students.

Intervention often focuses on reading. Reading proficiency is a gateway to all other learning in school. Sixty-seven percent of students in 8th through 12th grade are not proficient readers, according to the National

The effective use of academic intervention services does not depend on a law, regulation, source of funding, or program; it depends on a knowledgeable group of education professionals with many specialized talents working collaboratively to provide high-quality instruction to each student.

In the Rigor/Relevance Framework, effective instruction matches the quadrant with the instructional objective and moves toward Quadrant D learning activities.

Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). These reading issues are not typically issues with de-coding words. The difficulty is with comprehension; 90% of the reading difficulties of students in middle and high school are difficulties in comprehension.

Response to Intervention

One strand of intervention that seeks to look at intervention in a systems approach is Response to Intervention (RTI). RTI is often associated with students who have disabilities because it is linked to the reauthorization of IDEA (*Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*) in 2004. However, the goal of RTI is to meet the needs of students in the general education classroom and therefore avoid unnecessary classification for special education. RTI is a tiered approach to intervention, often represented by a pyramid.

There are several RTI models, the simplest being a three-tier approach. Tier 1 instruction is preventative; every child in a classroom experiences this instruction aimed at preventing learning failure. Such effective, solid, evidence-based instruction meets the nature and needs of the students and maintains fidelity to the content of the curriculum. Activities include: group work, small group work, individual practice, and assessments. Effective instruction naturally includes preventative intervention when it is conceptually rich and challenging, builds on the student's previous knowledge and skills, includes multiple strategies, addresses the standards of the curriculum, and reflects current research. In the Rigor/Relevance Framework, effective instruction matches the quadrant with the instructional objective and moves toward Quadrant D learning activities. If effective instruction is in place, 80% of the students will be successful with ongoing, preventative intervention.

Supplemental to Tier 1 instruction is Tier 2 instruction. Tier 2 is typically about differentiation and small group instruction that is designed to meet individual student needs, including the steps the teacher can and should take at the first sign of learning difficulty. Effective instructional practice for Tier 2 interventions occurs at the same time for everyone in the class, as all students are involved in either a small group or individualized instruction. This time can be used for: accelerated and challenging work for those children who are achieving at grade level in the particular unit of study, extra attention to the current lesson for those who are experiencing difficulty, and re-teaching of previous skills or teaching those skills in different ways for those who are struggling. Children are not assigned

Instructional Leadership — Quadrant D Leadership Practices

to tiers. Rather, they move in and out of tiered instruction as needed. Interventions occur for approximately 15% of the students who do not make adequate progress via Tier 1 instruction.

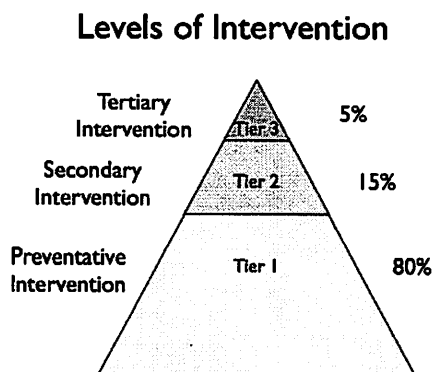
For some students, Tier 1 instruction and Tier 2 differentiation are not enough. For those students, Tier 3 intervention might be necessary some of the time. Tier 3 is even more targeted, systematic, and explicit than Tier 2. Tier 3 can be aimed at preventing children from needing special education services by providing more flexible, regular education options. Instructional support personnel, such as reading specialists or special education teachers, often provide Tier 3 interventions. However, a student does not need to be classified for special education in order to receive this support. Tier 3 intervention is provided for about 5% of the students who struggle, in spite of effective Tier 1 instruction and Tier 2 interventions.

RTI Tiers

Tier 1: Preventative Intervention - instruction that attempts to prevent a certain outcome from happening

Tier 2: Secondary Prevention - instruction that includes steps to take at the first sign of trouble

Tier 3: Tertiary Prevention - instruction that involves steps to take after a problem has manifested itself



The groups of professionals who will experience the greatest impact and change related to their professional responsibilities, and therefore will need the most professional development as school districts plan for RTI, are the general education teachers. RTI is an effort to avoid an unnecessary learning disability designation by giving the student precise, scientific-based assistance as early as possible.

RTI requires the classroom or content area teacher to focus on data-driven decision making and the collection of quantitative as well as meaningful qualitative data by the general education teacher to aide in intervention decision making. Reading specialists, special education teachers, and literacy coaches are among the best-trained professionals in the school district to help develop, implement, and evaluate new models of intervention strategies. The potential for success of Rtl lies in providing teachers and/or paraprofessionals with concrete information on how to vary the instructional level and scaffold the support needed by students.

Supplemental Instructional Time

Through systemic RTI practices, schools should limit taking students out of regular instruction. However, part of an overall system of providing high-quality earlier instruction is providing supplemental instructional time. Supplemental instruction is frequently provided using federal funding resources, such as Title 1. Schools should include as many options as are necessary to meet the range of student needs, including:

Within-class staffing that reduces student-teacher ratios (e.g., co-teaching, team-teaching). Often the immediate response to providing supplemental instruction is to add onto the class instruction. However, placing additional professional staff within the classroom and class period to provide additional and more individualized instruction can also provide supplemental instruction.

Extra time during the regular school day. Depending on the school schedule, there may be opportunities to create additional instructional time by adjusting lunch periods or time allocated to other subjects.

Extended school day. The most common way to provide supplemental instructional time is extending the school day. This time might be both formal class periods and informal times for tutorials by teachers who

are available to work with individual students. Schools may provide transportation services to make extended school day sessions more convenient to students and families.

Before-school sessions. Many schools are finding before-school options viable. Sessions might be short time periods devoted to instruction, while other students have unstructured time in the morning. Many urban schools that rely on public transportation for students create staggered starts to the school day in which some students start school earlier in order to obtain supplemental instruction. In this type of option, staff might have different work hours or some staff receive stipends for working longer hours.

Evening and weekend sessions. Evenings and weekends are also options, but they are less popular and usually reserved for students who have significant behavioral issues that make it difficult for them to participate in school with the larger school population.

Summer sessions. Summer school is the traditional remedial program for high school students who fail courses. Using summer school solely for students who have failed is becoming less popular. However, summer sessions for students are increasingly used for students at all grade levels. Many charter schools are experimenting with a longer school year. Some urban schools have created summer sessions in an effort to lessen the reduction in learning that often occurs during the summer for students living in poverty. The Syracuse City School District in New York recently adopted an 11-month “urban” teacher calendar whereby all teachers are employed for an additional month. Schools are encouraged to create summer supplemental instructional programs for at-risk students using this available pool of instructional staff.

Intervention Specialists

Intervention specialists are a growing group of educators for which many states now have specific certification. An intervention specialist may assume a variety of roles in the school, depending on the support needs of the students served:

- teaching collaboratively with the general classroom teacher
- serving as a consultant to several classroom teachers
- working with small groups of students in a resource room

- teaching in a self-contained classroom
- providing private tutoring in academic areas for students with learning disabilities.

When schools have people in positions like “intervention specialist,” “math specialist,” or “reading specialist,” the tendency may be to schedule them in consistent ways for accountability reasons. For example, on Monday from 9:00 to 10:00 a.m. the math specialist is assigned to work within the 3rd grade class to support three students who struggle with math. Then the specialist goes to the 4th grade class to support students in that class. This method rarely works. Depending on the lesson and the concepts being taught, those students may or may not need the specialist to be present in the room.

The intervention specialists should be assigned caseloads of students, preferably no more than 25. They should plan their week around what those children are going to be learning and anticipate areas where they might need pre-teaching, re-teaching, or alternative teaching. Such a schedule requires the establishment of trust — the other teachers need to trust that the intervention specialist is working when he or she is not 100% visible in the classroom, and the administration needs to trust the intervention specialist to plan his or her day in accordance with contractual agreements (one planning period, one lunch, etc). Trust usually emerges after results begin to become evident. Overcome the “scheduling hurdle,” however, can be difficult. The intervention specialist should not be planning around the teacher; he or she should be planning around the student.

The intervention specialist should not be planning around the teacher; he or she should be planning around the student.

Credit Recovery

A rapidly growing practice in high schools is credit recovery. While credit recovery is not a direct intervention into classroom instruction, it is an alternative form of instruction, which helps to retain students in school and assist them in making progress toward a diploma. As schools are under increasing pressure to increase graduation rates, many schools have turned to credit recovery programs to retain students and improve graduation results. Credit recovery is an alternative to traditional remedial lessons, summer school, or evening programs. Many credit recovery programs are technology-based, and after the initial investment, they provide a cost-effective way for students to complete required coursework, often in an accelerated manner.

Under increasing pressure to increase graduation rates, many schools have turned to credit recovery programs to retain students and improve graduation results.

Program options available to schools in credit recovery have experienced rapid growth. Many states have virtual school programs in which students are specifically there for credit recovery purposes. Some of the commercial programs that are popular in secondary schools include Apex Learning, PLATO Learning, Pearson Digital Learning, Know The Net, and Penn Foster. The North American Council for Online Learning (NACOL) produced a summary document in June 2008 that outlined promising practices/success stories and suggestions for operating effective credit recovery programs through online learning.

Using Online Learning for At-Risk Students and Credit Recovery is available at www.inacol.org/research/promisingpractices/NACOL_CreditRecovery_PromisingPractices.pdf.

Schools should be cautious in relying too heavily on credit recovery programs as an option for students. However, credit recovery programs and online learning provide viable options for many students who may be struggling in the regular classroom and become frustrated with trying to accumulate sufficient graduation credits in the regular education program.

Tool for Academic Intervention

The Five Key Elements Checklist that follows is taken from the International Center publications, *Strategies for Students with Disabilities in General Education Curriculum* (K-8 and high school editions).



Five Key Elements Checklist	Pervasive	Considerable	Partial	Initiated	Absent
Ownership					
Does the general education faculty take ownership of the performance of students receiving special education services?					
Is there complete integration of general education faculty and special education faculty in the building?					
Do building administrators take responsibility for the performance of students receiving special education services?					
Is there a universal lack of a "my kids/your kids" attitude among staff?					
High Expectations					
Does your building have a strategy for ensuring that staff have high expectations for each and every student?					
Do staff embrace the belief that they are collectively responsible for the learning of each and every student?					
Has your building systematically defined academic and behavioral expectations to develop consistency across all grade levels?					
Is there a clear understanding of the difference between holding every student to the same standards and having high expectations for each student?					
Is the commitment to high expectations part of your interview/ orientation process for new staff?					
Is the commitment to high expectations part of the ongoing faculty evaluation procedures?					
Does each student in your building know that the staff have high expectations for him or her?					
Are high expectations for students emphasized in every grade level within your building?					
Does the level of expectations in your building have a relationship to the special education service delivery model you use?					
Can you feel the culture of high expectations for all when you walk into the building?					



Five Key Elements Checklist	Pervasive	Considerable	Partial	Initiated	Absent
Intervention System					
Does your building have an intervention system in place to help struggling learners so they can meet academic and/or behavioral expectations?					
Is your intervention system owned by general education?					
Does your building have a defined screening system that allows teachers to identify what a student knows and does not know to make further decisions about core instruction, supplemental instruction, and interventions? Is this system organized to recognize and respond to prevent failure?					
Does your building have a definition of an intervention?					
Is your intervention process viewed as a "pre-referral" process?					
Does your building have an established team trained in a problem-solving approach to develop student-specific interventions?					
Has your intervention team been trained to function efficiently as a team?					
Does your system include screening for all students, diagnostic evaluation, and progress monitoring?					
Does your intervention system monitor schoolwide data as well as individual student data, and is the data used to drive instructional decision making?					
Do you have policies, procedures, and protocols for your intervention system to ensure consistency?					
Is there a process in place to ensure that interventions are implemented with fidelity?					
Do you collect data to monitor the effectiveness of your intervention system?					
Does your staff development program support teachers in building their skills in the use of evidence-based interventions?					
Is describing your intervention system part of the orientation program for new administrators and teachers?					

Five Key Elements Checklist	Pervasive	Considerable	Partial	Initiated	Absent
Inclusion/Collaborative Teaching					
Has a vision of shared responsibility between general and special education teachers been established?					
Has an assessment been done to determine whether your school is ready for collaborative teaching?					
Has a definition of collaborative teaching been developed that everyone understands?					
Have the pairings of partners been carefully considered based on strengths and other factors?					
Were skill-building opportunities provided before beginning collaborative teaching?					
Did administrators and teachers have the opportunity to visit successful programs?					
Is there monitoring of the fidelity of implementation of collaborative teaching?					
Are administrators helping teachers to evaluate their effectiveness and make adjustments in their approaches?					
Has there been communication with parents about the approach?					
Are there criteria for determining which students can benefit?					
Is there common planning time, and has training been provided on how to use it?					
Do new collaborative teaching partners meet before school starts?					
Do collaborative teaching partners have a regularly scheduled opportunity to meet with their co-teaching colleagues to discuss ideas and issues?					
Does your building schedule your students receiving special education services first?					



Five Key Elements Checklist	Pervasive	Considerable	Partial	Initiated	Absent
Organization/Professional Development					
Is there a process for ensuring that the best practices within your building become common practice?					
Is there consistent and productive communication between your building and the buildings connected to you by feeder patterns?					
Are your feeder school curriculums aligned?					
Do you have a system for ensuring that data to inform instruction is provided in a timely and consistent manner to teachers?					
When constructing your school schedule, do you schedule students who need additional or unique services and supports first?					
Is your staff development program focused on instructional and organizational priorities set by analyzing school data?					
Is the focus of staff development persistent over time?					
Are your staff development resources aligned so there is sufficient building level and classroom level follow-up to ensure the "institutionalization" of the information and skills being targeted?					
Is the effectiveness of your staff development effort measured by improvement in the critical areas of need identified through your data analysis?					

Instructional Coaching

Instructional coaching, an effective onsite, job-embedded professional development practice of peer assistance, is based on current research and effective instructional practice. It creates collaborative professional learning and provides sustained support for individual teachers and school improvement efforts. An instructional coach educates teachers about strategies and classroom routines that have been validated through research. The coach assists the teacher in a specific content area, while integrating the goals of the school and district, focusing on and improving instructional practice and student achievement.

Leadership Strategies

Instructional coaches act as onsite professional developers who assist teachers in implementing proven instructional practices. The instructional coach and the individual teacher (or team of teachers) form a partnership to analyze the teacher's (team's) needs and discuss research-based ideas and solutions. They also work together to find ways to meet those needs. Considerable knowledge is gained on the job.

Just as educators provide teacher-to-student support, peer observation provides teacher-to-teacher support.

The coach frequently models the instructional practice for the teacher. The coach then observes the teacher engaged in the same practice. Action research can be used as the mentor and mentee share ideas, identify problems, create solutions (research-based practices and interventions), model the suggested modifications in instruction, and observe and provide feedback. The mutual supportive relationship created by the coaching model enriches not only the professional learning, but also the collegiality, friendship, and collaborative spirit of the coach and teacher.

Although the format of the peer review process differs from school to school, the objective is always the same — to help teachers improve instruction. Coaching involves using one's peers to examine aspects of teaching and learning. Staff can use the opportunity to reflect on strengths and weaknesses, and to work together to make improvements. The overall goal is to establish a culture of self-study that stimulates continuous inquiry, reflection, information sharing, and success.

Instructional coaching is not a one-shot effort. It is an intensive, ongoing effort.

There are many variations in a coaching program; however, several common practices ought to be in place in any successful program. A strong focus on professional practice and improving the effective instructional strategies that lead to student achievement is essential.

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Since instructional coaching is job embedded and takes place within the school day, it does not significantly interfere with the instructional process or remove teachers from the classroom for outside workshops. Conversations related to coaching are conducted within planning periods, designated team meetings, or after school.

Coaches should see themselves as collaborators with teachers to guide the discovery implementation and support the introduction of new instructional strategies. It is important that the coach does not become an evaluator — nor is perceived to be an evaluator — in judging the quality of teaching. The role of the coach is to discuss teaching practices with colleagues in a nonjudgmental way. The nature of conversations and reporting about coaching should be confidential. These are professional conversations as teachers attempt to improve strategies and should not draw attention to a specific teacher's performance.

Coaches need to be excellent communicators that can clearly listen respectfully, ask thought-provoking reflective questions, and keenly observe instructional practice and student engagement in the classroom.

Elements in a successful coaching program include:

Clear focus and continuity. Everyone should understand the purpose of coaching and every effort should be made to maintain consistent coaching over a significant period of time.

Strong personal relationships. It is important for coaches and teachers to get to know one another, build strong relationships, and create an atmosphere where teachers feel respected and comfortable about taking risks to introduce new strategies. An environment in which teachers are frequently ridiculed for poor practices will likely avoid risk taking and innovation.

Strong principal support. Within the school, coaching should be seen as an extension of the overall improvement efforts. Messages from the principal should be supportive and consistent with the efforts underway in school coaching.

Clear roles. Clear roles for the coach and each teacher are necessary in understanding what a coach does and doesn't do. The coach does not

replace some of the functions of school administration and supervision. The coach is primarily there to support and guide the introduction of new strategies among the teaching staff.

Time. Since coaching takes time, schools need structures for teachers that provide available time to meet with coaches, discuss teaching practices, and reflect on their own practice.

Continuous learning. Both coaches and teachers need to be involved in and have a mindset for continuous learning. Coaches will learn a great deal about teaching practices by observing many different classrooms and then sharing these skills with other teachers. Teachers also need to recognize the need for continuous learning and the value of improving strategies for student achievement.

Many myths circulate about coaching:

Myth: Coaches cannot impose on teachers since they have no supervisory responsibilities.

Reality: While a coach is not a supervisor and should not be confused with evaluating teachers, coaches can expect teachers to connect their instructional strategies and priorities with the school's vision and mission, and ask questions which cause teachers to reflect on the quality of instruction and student achievement within their classrooms. Coaches are expected to be nonjudgmental; however, they need to be proactive advocates for improving instruction within the classroom.

Myth: Teachers resist change.

Reality: While many teachers are perceived as resistant to new ideas, it is really change that empowers individuals and offers the greatest rewards. Most people resist being changed, but welcome the opportunity to change when they can develop their own ideas and are recognized for their innovation. Coaches need to empower individuals to reflect on their practice and take control of the changes necessary in the classroom to increase student achievement.

Instructional Leadership — Quadrant D Leadership Practices

Myth: The work of coaches is to support teachers.

Reality: While the work of a coach might be considered as supportive, the coach is in the classroom to improve student achievement. The needs of the students are most important and the purpose of the coaches is to guide the teacher in ways that will improve instruction and benefit the students. While the coach attempts to develop a good working relationship with the teacher, a coach must never lose sight of the fact that they are there for the students.

Myth: Once coaches are accepted, they have more leverage to work with teachers.

Reality: Coaches need to develop solid relationships with teachers, but they should never overemphasize being accepted by the teacher and lose track of their agenda to improve classroom strategies in student achievement.

Myth: Helping teachers know about or learn how to implement new instructional strategies is a coach's primary responsibility.

Reality: Again, the primary purpose is student learning, not improving instructional strategies. Teachers must know not only know how to use effective instructional practices, and implement those when and where appropriate to increase student achievement.

Tools for Instructional Coaching

Five tools are provided to assist with instructional coaching.

- Planning a Coaching Program — Questions to Consider
- Checklist for Instructional Coaching Program
- Typical Instructional Coaching Activities
- Situational Coaching —What to Do When
- Reflective Questions in Instructional Leadership for Rigorous and Relevant Instruction



Planning a Coaching Program — Questions to Consider

- ▶ What is your rationale for considering coaching?
- ▶ What questions or needs are you trying to address through coaching?
- ▶ What evidence have you gathered that these questions or needs are the right ones to address?
- ▶ What are the content areas (subjects or roles) for which you are considering coaching?
- ▶ Who are the key players in your system who will need to understand and “own” the concept of coaching? How will you go about “making the case” for them?
- ▶ What are your ideas for sharing responsibility, leadership, development, and credit?
- ▶ How do you see coaching might address the issues of collaboration, culture, and collective capacity in your district?
- ▶ What, specifically, is the central office role in support of coaching?
- ▶ How will the central office demonstrate the system's support of coaching?
- ▶ What is the district's message about how coaching fits into the spectrum of reform efforts?
- ▶ How will you ensure an equitable allocation of resources, time, and staff?
- ▶ How will you help schools determine their needs and areas of focus? How will coaching address those areas?
- ▶ What kinds of professional learning opportunities will coaches, teachers, and district personnel be offered or lead to support coaching?
- ▶ How can the central office support coaching through technology and data systems?
- ▶ What practices are already in place at the central office to support instructional capacity building?
- ▶ Where might your district look to find the most appropriate coaches?



- ▶ Where might your district look to find the staff to support coaching?
- ▶ What characteristics must coaches in your particular context have?
- ▶ What kinds of content knowledge or professional learning knowledge must coaches in your context have?
- ▶ What kinds of people are best positioned to have an impact on your system through coaching?
- ▶ How will you support the learning needs of the coaches?
- ▶ How will the selection process articulate and align with your system's stated needs?
- ▶ What are the expected outcomes of coaching at the central office and school level for the first year of implementation? What about after two years?
- ▶ In what ways will the central office take responsibility for the work of coaching?
- ▶ How will coaches be evaluated and by whom?
- ▶ How will the central office support the documentation of the coach network and disseminate that information throughout the system?
- ▶ What will be the indicators of success for year one, year two, and so on?
- ▶ What examples of evidence-based documentation will help limit the wide variance of coaching practice across schools?
- ▶ What kinds of specific timelines and benchmarks throughout the school year will help guide the coaches' work, as well as the central office's support work?





Checklist for Instructional Coaching Program

Yes	No	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	There are clear purposes (an agenda) for conducting a coaching program.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	There is a clear indication of which instructional disciplines and teachers will be included in the coaching program.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	All teachers involved in the coaching program have been informed of the purpose of the program and the functions of the instructional coach.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Coaching is appropriately connected to the ongoing professional development activities in the school.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The role of instructional coaches is clear and they understand how to spend their day and time.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	There are clear criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of the coaching program
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Coaches are provided with training.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Coaches are provided with ongoing support and opportunities to share problems and ideas with other coaches.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Evaluations are conducted on the coaching program and results are provided as feedback to the administration and coaches.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	There is adequate support from the district for conducting a coaching program and assisting with the training of instructional coaches.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	There are clear data indicators for the success of the coaching program and specific benchmarks that describe the progress to be made in coaching.



Typical Instructional Coaching Activities

- ✓ Observing instruction to establish schoolwide priorities for improvement
- ✓ Co-teaching with teachers to implement a new strategy
- ✓ Co-planning a lesson to incorporate the strategy and align the lesson with standards
- ✓ Providing feedback and consultation to the teacher on a particular lesson or strategy
- ✓ Analyzing student work
- ✓ Facilitating groups of teachers to analyze student work
- ✓ Demonstrating a strategy within the classroom
- ✓ Observing an individual lesson, and then providing reflection and feedback to the teacher regarding the effectiveness of the lesson
- ✓ Conducting study groups or book studies with groups of teachers
- ✓ Providing training or professional development for teachers
- ✓ Referring teachers to observations of other effective classrooms
- ✓ Organizing and sharing instructional materials and professional resources
- ✓ Facilitating team meetings to solve problems related to instruction.



Situational Coaching — What to Do When

Situation	Strategy	Coaching Role	Coaching Activities
Apathetic <i>Who are you? I don't care.</i>	Aspiration	Empathic Partner	Seek opportunities to make and interact with staff frequently Conduct classroom observations to gather school data Conduct student focus groups to gather school data Use specific questioning to establish rationales for current teaching practices
Unproductive <i>My teaching is fine. It's the students who are the problem.</i>	Exploration	Guide	Analyze student achievement data as a group Conduct a classroom observation and provide specific feedback Use questions for teachers to reflect on their practice Model specific instructional strategies with time for discussion Identify a common specific instructional problem and seek solutions in a team setting Share reflective questionnaires with staff
Stuck in status quo <i>What I do has worked before.</i>	Creation	Motivator	Suggest a wide range of instructional resources Develop a detailed action plan Provide opportunities to observe other classrooms Arrange for a book study Share feedback from students



Situation	Strategy	Coaching Role	Coaching Activities
Confused <i>Nothing seems to be working.</i>	Collaboration	Facilitator	Videotape a portion of a lesson and analyze performance together Arrange for meetings with colleagues to share ideas and problem solve Collaboratively plan a lesson Hold a collaborative meeting around a specific instructional topic Facilitate opportunities to exchange ideas with others during team meetings
Fearful <i>I don't think I can do this.</i>	Maturation	Mentor	Encourage future participation in the conference or online learning opportunity Provide frequent feedback highlighting instructional strengths Analyze common student work among teachers from similar subjects Provide a specific training workshop
Tentative <i>I tried, but the results could have been better.</i>	Cultivation	Supporter	Publicly recognize outstanding strategies and expertise Provide compliments and positive feedback Identify additional individualized professional learning Encourage action research to evaluate what is working



Reflective Questions in Instructional Leadership for Rigorous and Relevant Instruction

- ▶ What do you want students to learn?
- ▶ How will students show you that they have learned?
- ▶ What are the expected levels of rigor and relevance?
- ▶ How will students apply what they have learned?
- ▶ What is the work that students will produce to demonstrate learning?
- ▶ What are some ways you are raising the rigor and/or relevance of student work?
- ▶ How does the level of student engagement influence the level of achievement and learning?
- ▶ How are you trying to increase the level of student engagement?
- ▶ What are some ways that you help students discover knowledge, rather than having you, as the teacher, cover knowledge?
- ▶ How are you meeting the needs of each student?
- ▶ What strategies do you use to address individual learning styles?
- ▶ What can I do as an instructional leader to support your efforts?
- ▶ What was the most successful part of the learning experience? Why?
- ▶ If you teach this lesson again, how would you change it?

Peer Review of Student Work

The objective of peer review of lessons is to help teachers improve instruction. There are two types of benefits to peer review of lessons. First, the teacher and his or her student's work receive feedback from the peer. This feedback reinforces high quality instruction and can also offer suggestions on how to improve instruction. Second, the reviewer benefits by observing the teaching of -others and then reflecting on whether his or her students could do the same high quality work.

The following activity offers a clearly defined process that outlines the roles and responsibilities of the reviewers and the teacher whose student work is being reviewed. Criteria for the review are included as well.

Leadership Strategies

Assign groups of teachers to work in a peer review of student work. It works best if all teachers teach the same subject or grade level. If you only have one or two teachers in a subject, you might partner with other schools in a district or region. Set up a timeframe and location for the reviews. The steps in the review process follow.

Prior to the Observation

Give teachers several weeks advance notice of the opportunity to participate in the review. Provide them with the Criteria for Lesson Review, and the Peer Review Lesson Submission Form to complete. Identify six to eight reviewers who teach the same subject or grade level as the teacher whose work will be reviewed.

For the Day of the Review

Make copies of the Criteria for Lesson Review and the completed Peer Review Lesson Submission Form from the teacher (one of each per reviewer)

Review of Lesson Presentation

Introduction. The facilitator gives an overview of the format, asks for a recorder, and distributes the Criteria for Lesson Review to each reviewer. (5 minutes)

Teacher presentation. The teacher outlines the learning experience, providing information on the context in which the work was done, targeted learning standard(s), and performance indicators. The teacher may suggest a focus question for the review. (10 minutes)

Quiet time. All reviewers read the Peer Review Lesson Submission Form, examine all corresponding materials, and take notes on the Criteria for Lesson Review. (10 minutes)

Reviewers' Feedback

Reviewers provide warm feedback (supportive and empathetic responses that emphasize the promise of the learning experience) and cool feedback (critical and comparative responses that emphasize the ways in which the learning experience could be enriched). The teacher listens and takes notes. (10 minutes)

Teacher Response

The teacher responds to the peer reviewers' comments. Reviewers become the active listeners. (10 minutes)

Full Group Conversation

Both teacher and reviewers engage in open conversation about the learning experience. (10 minutes)

Summary

The recorder summarizes the session, reviews references made to the criteria, and offers a general overall impression. (5 minutes)

Consultation

The facilitator, recorder, and teacher confer and complete a written report so that the teacher has immediate feedback on the learning experiences.

Tools for Peer Review of Student Work

- Peer Review Lesson Submission Form
- Criteria for Lesson Review



Peer Review Lesson Submission Form

Please write up the lesson to be reviewed, addressing each of the categories.

Lesson Title _____ Your Name _____

Learning Context

What is the purpose, objective, or focus of the learning experience, including the learning standard(s) and the specific performance indicators being assessed? Where does this experience fit in the school or course curriculum? What do students need to know and/or be able to do to succeed with this learning experience?

Outline and Timetable

Outline the major aspects of the lesson and state the amount of time needed to prepare and implement (length of class period(s) and number of days to complete the lesson).

Procedure

In narrative form, describe your actions and the actions of students. Include how the learning experience supports student progress toward attainment of the learning standards, reflects current scholarship in your field and "best" classroom practice, and incorporates technology (if applicable).

Reflection

Why was this lesson developed? What did you learn from implementing it? Was it effective?

Resources

List unique resources (human or material) needed to complete this experience successfully, both for the student and for you.

Instructional/Environmental Modification

Describe the procedures used to accommodate the range of abilities in the classroom, including students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency, or bilingual students.

Student Work

What products will students produce? Attach examples or photographs of student work reflecting different levels of student performance.

Assessment Plan

Describe the manner in which student work will be evaluated and the ways students will reflect on their work. Submit any assessment tools used to document student progress (e.g., scoring guides, rating scales, checklists).



Criteria for Lesson Review

I. RELATION TO LEARNING STANDARDS

This learning experience clearly links to performance indicators/topics/benchmarks for the specified learning standard(s). It requires students to understand and use ideas, perspectives, tools, and/or methods that are central to the learning standards.

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Poor

II. RIGOROUS

The learning experience is appropriately challenging in academic rigor, allowing students to think independently and extend their knowledge.

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Poor

III. REAL-WORLD RELEVANCY

The learning experience relates to a problem or situation connected to the world beyond school and allows students to focus on a real audience for a real purpose.

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Poor

IV. STUDENT WORK

The student work is clearly identified, it relates to the learning standards, examples are presented, and it is clear how the work will be assessed.

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Poor

V. ENGAGEMENT

The learning experience allows students to become actively engaged in tasks that lead directly toward the learning objectives.

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Poor

VI. ASSESSMENT PLAN

The learning experience incorporates elements of good assessment: clear criteria to guide work, feedback on work in progress, and reflection on work completed.

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Poor

VII. ADAPTABILITY

The learning experience is adaptable to other classrooms and other students. It does not require a narrow student population, undue expenses, or extraordinary circumstances.

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Poor

VIII. TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

The technology, if used, assists students in achieving the learning standard addressed in the assessment plan.

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Poor

IX. PRESENTATION

The learning experience is clearly written and fully developed so that other teachers have a real understanding of what is happening in the classroom and can relate to it.

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Poor

All students know grades are important. However, the culture in many schools reflects that grades are the only thing that is important. In such a culture, students learn how to play the “grade game.” Some students strive to become valedictorian, others use grades to maintain eligibility for a sports team, and still others ask what is needed to get a passing grade. Students care little about the work or the learning, only what is necessary to receive the “grade.” Grading has become a school practice that perpetuates the status quo, while many original grading practices have lost their true meaning.

While grades can become an influential lever in instructional change, reflecting on current grading practices is critical. It is also essential to have consistency across the entire school system about how grades are used. After implementing instructional leadership initiatives, schools that have neglected to examine grading practices have seen only minimal student improvement. Ideally, those grading practices need to be embedded in an overall scheme of instructional leadership.

Leadership Strategies

Leaders can examine school grading practices and ask teachers to reflect on practices that are meaningful, and practices that are routine and have lost their purpose and meaning.

Grading Pitfalls

The following grading practices often negatively affect student engagement and achievement:

Grading on the curve. In a system in which students are being held to the same standards, grading and reporting must be done in reference to specific learning goals rather than to normative criteria or “on the curve.” In other words, students must be graded in terms of what they have learned, not in terms of their relative standing among peers. Schools that use normative grading strive for consistent grade distributions from one teacher to the next. Consequently, in this type of grading system, every teacher’s classes have the same percentage of As, Bs, Cs, etc. While this practice is more common in colleges, many high school teachers feel that they are not teaching to high standards unless a certain percentage of students receive failing grades. The consequences of this practice are

Grading Practices

When a conversation turns to grading practices — sharing what does and does not work — very emotional exchanges about teaching and learning often ensue.

detrimental to the relationships among students and between teachers and students; it also gives students a false sense of learning.

Valedictorians and class rank. There is nothing wrong with recognizing excellence in academic performance. In selecting a class valedictorian, many schools operate under the traditional premise that there can be only one truly excellent student. While ranking students may be convenient for college admission offices, it is counterproductive to stimulating good student work. It is a myth that colleges require high school class ranking. Elite universities still select excellent students without class rank. Early in their high school careers, top students figure out the selection procedures and, often with the help of their parents, find ingenious ways to improve their standing in comparison to classmates. More schools are finding it better to recognize a group of outstanding students who are based on multiple criteria rather than recognizing a single student.

When teachers use grades as bonus points for attendance, good behavior, or doing something extra, they are really reducing the importance of grades for academic achievement and are poorly communicating the value of learning.

Grades as rewards. Teachers realize that one of the tools to which most students respond is the grading system. However, when teachers use grades as bonus points for attendance, good behavior, or doing something extra in the classroom, they are really reducing the importance of grades for academic achievement and are poorly communicating the value of learning. When grades as rewards become a frequent practice, students become less interested in learning because they know they can do extra work or “be good” to bring up their grades.

Grades as punishments. Likewise, when teachers reduce grades for late papers or take off points for poor behavior, they diminish the value of grades. No research supports the use of low grades or marks as punishment. Instead of prompting greater effort, this practice more often causes students to withdraw from learning. To protect their self-images, many students regard low grades as irrelevant and meaningless.

Good Grading Practices

The following grading practices often positively affect student engagement and achievement:

Use separate systems for grading behavior. Many elementary schools have long had the practice of reporting dual grades — academic achievement and effort — by subject. The negative student behaviors of handing papers in late, avoiding homework, arriving late to class, acting out in class, or missing necessary materials can all be translated into a

“work habits grade.” In this system, it is appropriate to award points to students who do additional work. For example, students might attend an after-school tutoring session and erase a tardy designation in the work habits grade.

Use incompletes rather than zeros. Teachers feel obligated to punish students who fail to do work. Rather than giving zeros to students whose work assignments are incomplete or not turned in on time, teachers might require those students to attend after-school tutoring sessions or special Saturday classes until the work is completed to a satisfactory level. In other words, they are not “let off the hook” with a zero. Not every late assignment triggers an after-school session, however. Late or missing routine homework assignments can be handled with daily work habit grades. Students learn that they have certain responsibilities in school and that their actions have specific consequences. This approach is more beneficial to students than simply assigning a zero and helps make grades a more accurate reflection of what students have learned. Implementing an after-school policy may require additional funding and support, but the payoffs are likely to be worth it.

Use systems that reflect the highest level of student learning. The goal of instruction is for students to master certain skills or acquire certain knowledge. The grading system should reflect this gradual development of skills. For example, in an art class, one student may start with inadequate skills to complete even the most basic assignment. But that student makes considerable progress and by the end of a course produces outstanding work. Another student starts with mediocre skills and doesn’t improve. If all work in the course is graded equally, the first student has some low and high grades, while the second student has all medium grades. Their grade averages might be similar even though the first student learned more and achieved at a higher level.

Use a grading system that recognizes the highest level of skill attainment. In a performance area such as art or music, it is easy to see that grades should reflect the best work and not be a simple average. But what about academic subjects? It is convenient to divide a subject such as math or science into a series of weekly objective tests, average the grades, and give the student an overall grade at the end of the marking period. There are three weaknesses to that approach. First, remember objective tests are only inferences of learning. Tests are not the actual or direct measure of learning, since no one can determine exactly what any one person knows and one can never be perfectly certain that the test

question measures learning. When considering the potential for poorly written questions, the chances for error dramatically increase. Second, giving numerical grades for all exams and test questions assumes equal value. Not all questions are equal in difficulty or in revealing what a student has learned. Third, even the most content-laden subjects have some gradual development of concepts that should be measured.

Teaching and grading practices that support measuring students at the highest level include:

- having students write a major paper or complete a project near the end of the course that counts as a large percentage of the overall grade
- allowing students to drop one or two of their lowest test grades
- using a final exam with essay questions that reflect the major concepts of the course
- using a portfolio assessment in which students select their best work

Well constructed performance tasks help teachers determine if their students really understand the coursework or if they are merely parroting information they have memorized.

Use performance-based assessments. Performance-based assessments are an effective way for teachers to learn whether students can understand concepts and apply their knowledge. It is not unusual for students to know all the facts, but they are unable to understand the connections between those facts or how to use them. Many students learn by rote, with little understanding of why, or they draw erroneous conclusions. Well constructed performance tasks help teachers determine if their students really understand the coursework or if they are merely parroting information they have memorized. Traditional short-answer tests tell little about how students think and whether they can use knowledge; they also do not help teachers to decide what to teach next.

Performance-based assessment involves gathering evidence about how students think, what connections they are making, and what strategies they use to solve problems.

On the other hand, good performance-based assessments ask students to explain and justify their work. As the students begin to justify their answers, they begin to reflect more on their own learning and take more responsibility for ensuring that they really understand why — not just what. In this way, learning becomes more than just filling in the blanks on a test on Friday afternoon. Performance-based assessment involves gathering evidence about how students think, what connections they are making, and what strategies they use to solve problems. Teachers use this type of assessment so that they know how and what to teach, not just to give students a grade.

Performance-based assessments differ from traditional multiple-choice or fill-in-the-blank tests in several ways. With performance-based assessments, student performance is compared to a set standard rather than against the performance of other students. Connections and higher level cognitive skills are easier to assess. Traditional tests have an element of surprise. Students, and even the teacher in the case of standardized state and national tests, never know what questions will be asked. With performance-based assessments, students know exactly what is expected of them.

Scoring guides should reflect qualitative differences in students' development. At its best, a scoring guide describes student performance at a given level of development. Moreover, while the scoring guide is used to assess each student's performance on the assessment task, students often refer to the scoring guide as they work through a task. The guides can be designed in many formats, although there are four basic types: holistic, checklist, analytic, and mini-rubrics. Sometimes performance assessments can be converted to a grade, but this is not a requirement. Teachers can use scoring guides to communicate to students about the quality of work without translating that work into a grade.

Try to move toward a proficiency scale and away from percentages. One of the most nonsensical debates in education circles is what percentage out of 100 should constitute a passing grade. Should 60% become the passing grade? Does 70% mean that students are learning more? If the passing grade is dropped to 55%, are standards being lowered? These questions are meaningless because the arbitrary numbers allow one to assume erroneously that there are uniform test questions that measure learning. Current high-stakes assessments do not report results based on percentages, and there is a valid reason for that. Test questions vary in difficulty and the pattern of questions that students answer right and wrong can be used to varying degrees to approximate learning.

NAEP sets an appropriate model of translating scale scores from an assessment into simple levels. These levels as follows are Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced. Grading systems for courses should target helping all students to meet the proficient level.

Below Basic means students have not demonstrated partial mastery of fundamental knowledge and skills.

Basic denotes partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work at each grade.

Proficient represents solid academic performance in which students have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, including subject-matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real-world situations, and analytical skills appropriate to the subject matter.

Advanced signifies superior performance.

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A teacher can build an appropriate grading system by translating each quiz, project, assignment, or test into these four levels. The overall grading system would then define how much of the student's work must be at each level to attain that level in each course. To fold this system into some traditional measures in education, schools could designate the grade A or 4.0 to Advanced, B or 3.0 to Proficient, and C or 2.0 for Basic. Schools may or may not want to use a grade of D and 1.0 for Below Basic.

Schools and teachers need to examine grading policies and ask serious questions as to whether current policies and practices promote student learning.

There is no perfect grading system, or school grading policy. Some degree of consistency across a school is helpful to students and parents. However, any school policy needs to be flexible enough to allow for the unique characteristics of each course and each student.

Grading systems influence instruction. Schools and teachers need to examine grading policies and ask serious questions as to whether current grading policies and practices promote student learning. Often, just making small changes and considering some of the ideas presented in this chapter can make a big impact on student work and learning.

Tools for Grading Practices

A worksheet to initiate discussion on grading practices and a student contract for making up work for an incomplete are provided.

- Creating a Grading Scheme for High Rigor/High Relevance
- Sample Student Contract for Making Up Work for Incomplete



Creating a Grading Scheme for High Rigor/High Relevance

Part 1

Read the following grading practices. Check five practices that you believe should be used as part of a grading scheme to move toward high rigor/high relevance instruction.

- ☐ Have a minimum grade, such as 50
- ☐ Drop the lowest quiz grade for a marking period
- ☐ Allow students to raise grades by retesting
- ☐ Give bonus points for difficult questions
- ☐ Make Quadrant D projects at least 50% of the grade
- ☐ Include a grade for a performance task in each grading period
- ☐ Give grades for good behavior
- ☐ Use contracts for requirements for students to earn an A grade
- ☐ Use incomplete or "I" for student work that does not meet minimum expectations
- ☐ Place at least one Quadrant B or C test question on every test
- ☐ Grade daily work habits
- ☐ Base a student grade on the highest and best work, rather than on an average of all work
- ☐ Count all grades equally
- ☐ Require all students to pass Quadrant A work before allowing them to do Quadrant D work
- ☐ Give students optional ways to show proficiency
- ☐ Give separate grades for knowledge (quizzes) and performance (projects)
- ☐ Have students contract for which grades they will receive
- ☐ Grade on a curve with the average performance a grade of B or C
- ☐ Use narrative feedback rather than letter or numerical grades
- ☐ Grade routine homework
- ☐ Use a four-point scale (1 = below proficiency, 2 = approaching proficiency, 3 = proficient, and 4 = exceeds proficiency)
- ☐ Give extra points for Quadrant B, C, or D work
- ☐ Have students grade each other's work

Part 2

Discuss with your group the grading practices in this activity and agree on which grading practices should be used to create a grading scheme that is consistent with raising student learning to a level of high rigor/high relevance.



Sample Student Contract for Making Up Work for Incomplete

SAMPLE I CONTRACT



To the parent/guardian of _____:

As a student in the Atlantic Community High School in 11th/12th Intensive Reading, your child, _____, is expected to perform at a level which merits a grade of C or better on the report card in each course. This letter is to inform you that your child has failed to meet the requirements for achieving such a grade in one or more of his/her classes. He/she has received a grade of I, which stands for "incomplete." It is important to note that I will automatically become F's if the student does not complete all make-up requirements within a certain period of time.

There is a specific procedure associated with removing grades of I from the student's record; see the following checklist for the requirements. Please recognize that the responsibility for completing this checklist belongs to the student and his/her parent or guardian.

Thank you for your support. Feel free to contact your child's teachers at 555-5555.

Sincerely,
11th/12th Intensive Reading Teachers

1. Parent letter returned and signed. Complete ____ Date/time: _____
2. After-school tutoring in media center Tues/Wed. Complete ____
(Requires signed check-in sheet.)
3. Completed ALL work assigned by teacher(s). Complete ____
4. Completed within appropriate time frame. Complete ____
(1 "I" – 2 weeks; 2 "I"s – 3 weeks; 3 or more "I"s – 4 weeks)

Please return a copy of this letter signed to indicate that you understand the process.

Signature

Date



I Contract: Make-Up Work

Intensive Reading 11th 12th grade

Due date: _____

All requirements must be met by the due date for a grade change to occur.

REQUIREMENTS:

Proficiency must be met in the following areas:

- Main idea/identifying relevant details
- Author's purpose/Author's point of view
- Context clues – how to use the clues to find meaning of unknown words
- Distinguishing between figurative and literal language
- Cause-and-effect relationships
- Compare/contrast relationships
- Reading informational text (graphs, charts, maps)
- Search and destroy test-taking techniques (preview, marking, text, chunking, and marginal note-taking)
- Test-taking strategies (eliminating, paragraph labels, identifying question types)
- Drawing conclusions/inferences
- Vocabulary strategies (how to break a word apart)
- Reference and research skills (evaluating and analyzing information)
- Writing skills – responding to literature
- Endurance in a passage

POSSIBLE ASSIGNMENTS:

- Portfolio
- Create a video to demonstrate proficiency
- Create an assessment test with an answer key
- Utilize NHS tutoring
- Newspaper activity – use the newspaper to practice skills
- Practice skills in a reading passage
- Create a game utilizing your weaknesses
- Create your own newspaper
- Oral demonstration of proficiency
- Reading logs
- Utilizing Q-cards to create questions
- Utilize technology programs providing documentation (Princeton Review, FCAT Explorer)

Case Study of Atlantic Community High School

Atlantic Community High School, in Delray Beach, Fla., is an example of a school that used changes in grading practices to improve instruction.

Proficiency means that a student can take any given problem or situation, process it, analyze it, and take action on a practical level to solve the problem.

Proficiency is mastery. Proficiency means that a student can take any given problem or situation, process it, analyze it, and more important, take action on a practical level to solve the problem. The definition of proficiency took on new meaning in Atlantic when it embraced the notion of true rigor and relevance in the school. Atlantic began with the Teacher Leadership Team discussing with the faculty what rigor and relevance meant in the curriculum. However, they found that when the theory of rigor and relevance had to be operationalized in a large, urban school, grading practices stood as an obstacle to achieving their vision of rigor and relevance.

When the faculty compared this situation to the successful IB program, they noticed the IB assessments did not have multiple-choice items, but rather incorporated authentic assessments that encouraged thinking, innovation reflection, project completion, and portfolios.

What is a grade? Very quickly, faculty conversations focused on the awarding of grades to students. They began to explore grading issues and proficiency more deeply when they realized that 30% of the students were not graduating. The faculty knew these students; they were smart, bored, and disengaged. They weren't necessarily kids that had behavioral issues. They just couldn't jump through the "right hoops." It was clear that the teaching methodologies were not reaching them. They were kinesthetic learners — they were students who needed to be assessed in a different modality. At the time, all the school did was award grades through paper-and-pencil recall tests. Students had to sit for an exam and fill in the bubbles for the answer. There were very few projects being done. When the faculty compared this situation to the successful International Baccalaureate (IB) program, they noticed the IB assessments did not have multiple-choice items, but rather incorporated authentic assessments that encouraged thinking, innovation reflection, project completion, and portfolios.

The faculty asked themselves why they could not apply the same high-quality assessments to all student learning. In their analysis, they found that, for their own convenience, teachers limited the way they assessed students. This realization was the impetus for hard conversations in which they had to ask two important questions: "Why are our students failing?" "What exactly is a grade?" However, when the faculty really analyzed what they were doing, they found out the grades — what they really

thought were affirming knowledge proficiency — were the very thing that was eroding the confidence of many of the students. The grading practices went against the goal of helping every student reach academic excellence.

New Grading System

These hard conversations have led to a new grading system. Teachers devised an A, B, C, I, and F system in which “I” stands for incomplete. The new letter replaces the D — a “mercy” grade, which sinks a student’s GPA. The old system did not spur students to work harder to improve; it made them work less and become bitter about school. As part of the new grading policy, the teachers came up with “I” contracts. These contracts state that a student must complete specific work to demonstrate proficiency. When the I contracts were first implemented, the teachers fell into the trap of having students make up all of the work that students did not complete. Teachers now handle the contracts much differently. Students are required to demonstrate proficiency, not complete endless worksheets and an arbitrary amount of seat time. In the current grading system, a grade of C is the threshold. This threshold was determined after investigating the grading policy for a local university’s graduate program.

Teachers also determined that everybody learns at a different pace. This means that some students’ education journeys toward proficiency move along faster than others, as will the path to mastery. By giving the students who need more time to master the content an I, the teachers are giving them the power to learn at their own pace in order to meet proficiency standards. This doesn’t mean that the teachers are “giving” grades. This would be an unethical practice. The teachers are providing students with the time necessary to develop skills and demonstrate content mastery. A component of the new grading policy is called “I on the fly,” which is nothing more than good teaching at its best.

In an “I on the fly” classroom, if a student hands the teacher something that is determined to be below proficiency standards, the teacher returns the work to the student with suggestions on what he or she can do to improve it. The student improves the work and turns it in again, and then it is graded. Students understand the I on a paper, for all of their teachers use it as a tool to attain proficiency in a content area. Replacing the D grade with an I has created a very different climate for student work and proficiency in Atlantic. Teachers are thinking more critically about

By giving the students who need more time to master the content an I, the teachers are giving them the power to learn at their own pace in order to meet proficiency standards.

what high-quality work is and are not just assigning routine busywork. Students take the work more seriously, and it is often more interesting and challenging. Best of all, students are attaining good grades and becoming closer to the prize of graduation. With this new grading system, working toward proficiency resulted in exhausted teachers after the first semester.

After close analysis, the faculty determined that incomplete homework was working against the students. This led to an analysis of homework policies. It didn't take long for teachers to realize that when a homework assignment was given, there weren't parents at home to assist students in the completion of the assignment. Moreover, many of the students had jobs or were taking care of siblings after school. Sometimes students are so active in after-school activities that homework was not reasonable for students to complete.

The faculty did not throw out homework totally, however. They made it meaningful rather than allowing it to be perceived as busywork. This change was monumental for teachers as well. Teachers were exhausted because they were overseeing the students making up all of the assigned homework. Therefore, the teachers streamlined the process so that instead of having students make up five incomplete assignments, the students completed one assignment that demonstrated proficiency in the material covered in the five assignments previously given.

Elimination of Zeros

Elimination of zeros is another grading practice that was eliminated. A zero sinks the student's average so deeply that there is no impetus for him or her to do any better. Again, there is no proficiency piece present if a zero is a current grading practice. Teachers utilize the I instead of the zero. If students are afforded this chance to make up work, things happen, discipline improves, and students are encouraged to perform. Just by eliminating zeros and implementing Is, teachers are seeing a maximum difference in the performance of students. Likewise, by eliminating the D grade, students either show proficiency and get the C or they receive an F. Students can still fail. However, teachers are committed to ensuring that failure is not an option. At the first sign of failing a class, students immediately go into a credit recovery program, which does not allow students to fall behind. In these credit recovery classes, which do not lock in time restraints, students must show proficiency according to the academic program before they are allowed to move on.

Improved Student Results

The results of these changes in grading practices are remarkable. Attendance for students and teachers has improved greatly. All students are on grade level, having the right amount of credits and a healthy GPA. Their next hurdle is passing the state FCAT (Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test), and taking the ACT and/or the SAT. Conversations are about getting diplomas and going to college or technical school. Prior to these changes, dozens of students were falling behind. The local junior college now comes to Atlantic in April to register every senior. So, students now have a better chance of going to college and their future is much more hopeful.

Celebrations and rituals are inherent to a school's culture. While celebrations can vary from school to school, the practice of celebrating is important to school culture. Celebrations are usually formal, public exhibitions that recognize the success of students or groups of students. When celebrations involve staff members and their accomplishments, they become a means of renewing a staff's enthusiasm and commitment to their profession. Celebrations are an excellent means of supporting staff and creating positive, collaborative relationships. Celebrations are also important for building and renewing a strong sense of community. This spirit of community raises the level of commitment and improves instruction among all teachers.

Leadership Strategies

Creating opportunities to celebrate accomplishments can build and maintain momentum toward successful improvement. When celebrations showcase the student, they are also showcasing the accomplishments of the faculty and the school as a whole.

Traditions

Families build relationships and a strong sense of connection through traditions and holiday celebrations. The same is true for schools. Similar to celebrations, traditions are also essential to building and renewing a sense of community. While celebrations are more common among

Celebrations

See also Chapter 3.

Celebrations are an excellent means of supporting staff and creating positive, collaborative relationships.

elementary schools, all schools should conduct celebrations appropriate to their students. One common ritual held in most schools is graduation. Graduation signals the celebration of successfully completing the course of study. Students, parents, and teachers all take pride in these accomplishments. The pomp and circumstance, the ritual of caps and gowns, and the awards provide great tradition for schools.

Academy of Holy Names High School, in Albany, N.Y., takes the celebration of graduation and extends this into a tradition that sets high expectations for incoming students. The awards ceremony is the beginning of three days of graduation events. As a symbolic gesture, the graduating seniors move from the auditorium to the stage to prepare for awards and recognition of their accomplishments. Following the senior's movement to the stage, the juniors move to the senior's vacant seats. Next the sophomores and freshmen are called to move up. Finally, in front of the packed auditorium, the incoming 8th grade students are welcomed into the auditorium to a round of applause. These incoming students and their parents then get to observe the significant awards and college scholarships given to the graduating seniors. This powerful tradition welcomes new students and set high expectations even before these students start their high school career.

Opening Year Activities

The opening of school provides a great opportunity to establish a sense of community. It is a time for all to begin afresh and try new approaches. Each school has at least some new students to introduce to the school culture. Most schools will have new staff as a result of attrition. For the opening staff day, be sure to introduce new staff and engage in activities for them to get to know other staff. There is time to remind staff of procedures and expectations, but also include part of the event with food and fun to make it a social occasion. Take time to reflect on accomplishments and communicate goals for the year.

In Japan, the new school year begins in the spring, which is an ideal time to connect the beginning of a new school year with the change of seasons and the emergence of green plants from the drab and cold of winter. Schools often start the year with a community festival to celebrate spring. Parents volunteer time to create floats and displays working along with children and teachers. This is a great way to build a strong sense of community as the school year begins and to establish positive

relationships with students, staff, and parents that will enhance learning throughout the school year.

Have a theme for the opening school event. For example, use shells off a beach and give one to each person to say that every single shell is different, just like the students in every classroom. Find commonalities among students and work in building relationships with all students, no matter how different they may be. Another example of a theme is a construction project. Relate how the school is constructing learning for students and in the process, building on a strong foundation. Commit to building a skyscraper. The sky is the limit for the heights that students can reach.

In that opening event, have teachers set goals for themselves, for their students, for their classroom relationships, and for themselves as educators. Write those goals in a letter, collect the letters, and return them to be read at a mid-year conference to review and see how they are doing.

Theme Celebrations

Elementary schools frequently hold celebrations in conjunction with holiday themes. These are convenient times and events to create a school celebration. In addition to holidays, look for opportunities to create a celebration around a theme. For example, a school might hold an event to highlight service learning around Labor Day or an environmental celebration on Earth Day.

Schools that have themed academies can use themes for specific celebrations. A.B. Combs Elementary School, in Raleigh, N.C., is a Leadership Magnet Academy. They use the leadership theme for major celebrations. This successful school has many requests for visits and they encourage visitors to come on these leadership celebration days when students showcase their work. Twice a year (in the fall and spring), educators from all over the world come to learn about the school. Students greet guests, present flags from countries that are represented at A.B. Combs, give speeches, showcase their talents, present data notebooks, and share their experiences. The visiting educators learn from the students and staff what makes their leadership model so special.

Schools that have a strong focus on academics use celebrations to recognize outstanding results of student and teacher efforts

Academic Celebrations

Schools that have a strong focus on academics use celebrations to recognize outstanding results of student and teacher efforts. Kennesaw Mountain High School, in Kennesaw, Ga., has an academic awards ceremony that rivals a sports pep rally or rock concert. Students take a strong leadership role in planning and implementing the awards programs, complete with music and dancing, but the focus remains on recognizing academic achievement in many forms.

Cambridge Middle School, in Cambridge, Minn., uses a Renaissance Incentive Program to recognize and reward student achievement. Students are included in this reward program each quarter that they have a 3.0 or higher GPA. They can also be included if they have a 2.75 GPA that has risen from the last quarter, or if their GPA has risen at least .5 from the last quarter. An average of 68% of the students makes this goal each quarter, for which they are recognized at a student assembly. Many parents attend this celebration to see their students awarded this honor. Students who “make Renaissance” receive a wristband to wear, making them eligible for small rewards given weekly throughout the school year. Over 55% of the students who are on free/reduced lunch make the Renaissance program; it is very popular with students.

Parent Involvement

Parent involvement is a key to student success; another goal of celebrations is to increase the level of parent involvement. Title I schools often have difficulty involving parents in school activities. English Estates Elementary School in Fern Park, Fla., has worked hard to provide engaging activities for parents and an inviting atmosphere. They have an active PTA that plans family activities such as Family Fun Fest (fall carnival and book fair), International Night (spring celebration of cultures with food and entertainment), Astronomy Night (a night to picnic and look at the stars and planets through large telescopes thanks to volunteers from the local Astronomical Society) and more!

The Parent Academy provides a wide variety of programs that are designed to help parents learn about the curriculum and school practices, meet other parents, and receive materials to help their children at home. Many activities are presented in Spanish as well. One of their most effective practices has been student-led conferences. Students invite their

parents and share their data notebooks. This practice gives the students an opportunity to talk about their goals, achievements, and strengths and weaknesses with their parents. Another effective program has been All-Pro Dads Breakfast. Several times a year, the school invites dads or male role models to join their children for breakfast from 7:30 to 8:00 a.m. They regularly see 50-75 dads in attendance, including many parents they do not see at other events. Dads interact with their children during planned activities and receive parenting tips. Celebrations can be large and schoolwide or they can be as small as one parent and one child.

Case Study of Ashe County Middle School

Ashe County Middle School, in Warrensville, N.C., is a model middle school that uses celebrations effectively.

Imagine a gymnasium decorated with round tables draped with linen tablecloths, lit candles, colorful streamers, and a glitter-lined red carpet leading up to a podium. This gym is full of excited middle school children. A limo pulls up with faculty members who get out and begin filling the gym floor and sitting at the decorated tables. The students rush to the red carpet to get autographs as the staff filters into the room. The air is bursting with excitement. As the program begins, a middle school rock band plays loudly and a student emcee welcomes everyone to the end-of-the-year Academic Awards Celebration. The special gala is filled with student performances interspersed with team awards, concluding with the administration awarding the highest overall award, The Bulldog Award, not to those students with the highest grades, but to students who are tenacious and focused on making good decisions and grades.

Students cheer as their friends perform acts, such as gymnastics, clogging, and dancing. Pianists, flutists, rock bands, and solo vocalists also entertain between team award announcements. The house erupts as Cary, a student with a disability, sings accompaniment for Michelle's ballet dance performance. Michelle just happens to be an academically and intellectually gifted (AIG) student who takes honors classes. The students probably know that Cary has a disability. Her speech is slurred and her notes are not perfect, but her effort is obvious. The students probably know that Michelle is smart and talented, but do not know that she is in honors classes. The creation of a master schedule with some

The creation of a master schedule with some heterogeneously grouped classes fosters a climate in which students do not know or care about education labels or placements

heterogeneously grouped classes fosters a climate in which students do not know or care about education labels or placements. What they do care about is that both of these students achieve success in their performances. Cheer on!

This celebration of success and achievement is only one of many ways Ashe County Middle School recognizes and celebrates success. A caring school in a supportive community, Ashe has a tradition of academic excellence, as well as service to the whole child.

Ashe County is an isolated rural county of 23,000 residents located in the Blue Ridge Mountains of northwestern North Carolina. The county serves a K-12 school population of 3,300 students. Tourism, industry, and farming are the chief economic activities. The county has seen an out-migration of citizens over many years as young people leave to find employment elsewhere. The population, however, has remained stable due to the influx of retirees and people with second homes.

Ashe County Middle School, opening in 1999, is the only middle school in the county and serves 497 students in grades 7 and 8. Almost 50% of the student population is economically disadvantaged. Thirteen percent of the students have disabilities and 16% are served in the Academically Gifted Program. Ethnic diversity is limited, with only 5% who speak English as a second language; 93% are Caucasian.

The tradition of academic excellence at the school is illustrated by recognition as an Honor School of Excellence, a School of Excellence, and a School of Distinction by the North Carolina Accountability Program. In 2007, the school was recognized as a one of five nationally recognized Metlife/National Association of Secondary Schools "Breakthrough" schools. Ashe has also been selected as a North Carolina School to Watch, an initiative developed by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform to identify high-performing middle schools.

The organizational structure of Ashe is based on bridging the gap between elementary and high school. Each program component meets the developmental needs of the young adolescent while enforcing a high standard for learning. The strength of the academic program can be credited to many dedicated staff members who recognize that a middle school needs to be different from other schools. It is one where you can find academic excellence and happy students. The school is organized

into six academic teams, with three 7th grade teams and three 8th grade teams. Teachers of each team are provided 80 minutes of common planning time each day. This time is divided equally to provide for both team and individual planning. Student schedules are comprised of four 80-minute blocks. Three of these blocks are spent in language arts, math, and science/social studies, and one block is elective time. For this elective class or “encore,” students choose from a variety of fine arts, foreign language, physical education, and technology classes.

Strong relationships are established through the looping of assistant principals and guidance counselors. This simply means that when a child enters the building as a 7th grader, he or she will have the same guidance counselor and the same assistant principal for both of the years he or she is in attendance. This strategy creates a better connection to the child, the child’s family, and the community.

In this grade 7-8 middle school structure, one group of students is coming in each year, while the other group is preparing to leave. Transitions from elementary to middle school and middle school to high school become very important for both the student and the school. School personnel make every effort to support students and make the transitions as smooth as possible. School staff visit elementary schools and introduce the middle school program and its offerings to both elementary teachers and rising 7th graders. Visits to the middle school, participation in structured activities, and the opportunity to interact with other students all help students become acclimated to the middle school culture before they ever attend classes. Parent nights are designed to help ease the transition for parents. Similar activities are conducted for students and parents who are preparing to leave middle school and enter high school.

The focus of Ashe’s academic program is to prepare students for high school and real-life situations by teaching important concepts, essential skills, and problem solving. All students and staff are expected to meet high academic standards through a rigorous curriculum. A “no-excuses” approach ensures that all students are held accountable for learning. Teachers use many instructional strategies to engage, challenge, and captivate the learning styles of students. Students are expected to take advantage of the numerous opportunities available to correct academic deficiencies.

Through a combination of activities involving parents, students, and teachers, the school effectively bridges the transitions these middle school students face.

Teachers also use a variety of instructional approaches to accelerate and support academic learning. As teachers work to align the curriculum with the state standards, they do so in creative and innovative ways that help motivate and prepare students for successful futures. Strategies used include cooperative grouping, learning styles inventories, guest speakers, and thinking maps to differentiate instruction and make learning meaningful for all students.

Language arts teachers use guided reading, Socratic seminars, literature circles, Paidia, and CRISS strategies to promote growth in reading and writing. The writing process is taught through modeling and practice. The goal is to make students readers of their own writing by teaching them to self-edit and also to be effective peer editors. Assessments are made relevant by publishing student work in local newspapers and by creating a writing community where parents are invited into classrooms to share with and celebrate student authors. All teachers are teachers of writing who provide writing practice in all curricular areas and for many different purposes. Visitors to the building often comment on the quality and quantity of writing displayed throughout the building. Due to this rigorous writing program, Ashe continues to have some of the best writing scores in North Carolina.

Because project-based learning develops skills necessary for adulthood, teachers assign long-term projects throughout the year.

Because project-based learning develops skills necessary for adulthood, teachers assign long-term projects throughout the year. Poetry notebooks, short story projects, and literature projects are just a few of the many learning experiences required. The North Carolina Standard Course of Study for social studies in 7th grade includes the study of Asia, Africa, and Oceania. To build bridges across disciplines, many classroom novel studies are based on the social studies curriculum. For example, while studying Asia, 7th graders might read *Children of the River*, a novel about Cambodian refugees; or *Red Scarf Girl*, a novel about the Chinese Cultural Revolution; or *Farewell to Manzanar*, a story about the Japanese internment camps. In 8th grade, students study North Carolina and U.S. history. Novels included in this study are *The Wright Brothers*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and *Anne Frank: Diary of a Young Girl*. Through the use of novels in social studies, teachers are able to reinforce vocabulary and establish cultural awareness.

Interdisciplinary units create understanding and relevance across disciplines; subjects are not taught in isolation but rather through topical studies.

Interdisciplinary units create understanding and relevance across disciplines; subjects are not taught in isolation but rather through topical studies. Supported by a grant, 7th graders developed an integrated unit

on Africa. Students read the novel, *Safari Journal*; constructed masks; learned and retold folktales; collected, analyzed, and illustrated data on vital statistics of Africa; created country brochures; studied African wildlife; and visited the North Carolina Zoo. As a culminating event, a Parent Night was held for students to showcase their work. Eighth grade students are involved in an interdisciplinary unit called "Beyond the Deep Blue." The study covers a variety of topics related to the beach and specifically the North Carolina coast, ending in a trip to the coastal area of North Carolina. Language arts activities include reading the novel, *The Pearl*, and the short story, "The Sea Devil," writing short stories and poetry, and constructing their own sea creatures. Social studies assignments include mapping activities, study of the "graveyard of the Atlantic," and piracy, in which students use technology to create their own pirate characters, complete with wanted posters. In math class, students create dilations of nautical maps, use calculators to graph models of marine life and symbols, and construct sand castles using geometrical shapes. Bathymetric profiles of the ocean floor, and the hydrological cycle and shoreline are studied in science. In health and physical education, students learn to shag and are taught the importance of sun protection.

Science teachers make learning relevant for their students using inquiry-based lessons and available technology. One major activity involves chemical monitoring of a stream on school property that feeds into the New River, a nationally protected river. Students use Calculator-Based Laboratory probes and graphing calculators to analyze, display, and store data. They test the water quality for biological indicators by finding and classifying macroinvertebrates according to their pollution tolerance levels. Next, students turn their attention to groundwater as they build a model of an aquifer with a well. They then explore how the groundwater can carry pollution throughout the aquifer. A writing activity concludes the water study as students write about methods of water treatment and reclamation.

The integration of media and technology is an important component of the academic program. A strong instructional partnership exists between the media specialist, classroom teachers, and students. Through this collaboration, students are taught how to find and use information effectively. Attention is focused on the learner so that media services expand, support, and complement classroom learning. These skills establish the ability for lifelong learning. The media specialist supports the success of each of the interdisciplinary units by helping students

perform research and produce final products such as Microsoft Publisher brochures and PowerPoint presentations.

These students practice skills in natural settings so that upon graduation they will be comfortable and as independent as possible while living, learning, working, and recreating in the community.

Students in the multihandicapped classroom are given authentic learning opportunities through community-based instruction. These students practice skills in natural settings so that upon graduation they will be comfortable and as independent as possible while living, learning, working, and recreating in the community. For example, students are taken to McDonald's where they learn to order and pay for their food. This activity not only helps students to function more independently, but also builds natural supports within the community. Students get to know people who can provide services for them, and the community becomes acquainted with them as well. As students learn to participate in activities, service providers learn the strengths and personalities of the students so that possible barriers, prejudices, and fears are dissolved.

Students and teachers at Ashe are busy, productive, and happy. The school culture is one of high expectations for all students. Some students need the support of a Discovery Block or 4-H Bulldog Alert — S.O.S. in order to achieve their goals; others thrive on the challenges provided through interdisciplinary teaching, exploratory science, and honors classes. All can find something at Ashe to support their unique needs.

Success is not defined as being the best at everything, but rather as doing your personal best.

Student success is revered and celebrated on a regular, conscious basis. Success is not defined as being the best at everything, but rather as doing your personal best. There is room for everyone at Ashe, and that is reflected in the bustling, energetic atmosphere one feels immediately upon entering the building.

Teachers, too, are nurtured in this setting. Collaboration and teamwork are the norm. Support from, and interaction with, colleagues is sometimes rare in education, but that is accomplished in Ashe's organizational pattern. Teacher creativity is encouraged and respected. New teachers are provided with role models, support, and encouragement as they learn the school's expectations and develop their teaching skills.

Whether it is the School Awards Celebration with visiting "celebrities," a choral concert, an athletic contest, or a regular school day, Ashe County Middle School is the place to be for adolescents in Ashe County. The collaboration of everyone has created a true model middle school.

A staff that functions as a professional learning community comes together for learning within a supportive environment. Participants interact, test their ideas, challenge one another's ideas and interpretations, and process new information gleaned from these exchanges. Typically, teachers unite to focus on the topics of their choice that are related to instruction, student achievement, and assessment. The professional learning community is characterized by supportive and shared leadership, values, and vision; collective learning and the application of that learning; and conditions that enable the group to meet regularly to solve problems and make decisions.

The benefits of professional learning communities for teachers include the following:

- decreased sense of isolation
- increased commitment to the mission and goals of the school
- a sense of collaborative responsibility toward student achievement and school success
- renewed motivation to teach
- lower rates of absenteeism
- increased knowledge about student needs and successful teaching practices

Leadership Strategies

Several key aspects differentiate a professional learning community from simply a teaching staff that meet and share ideas or teacher teams that happen to meet on a regular basis. The term, "professional learning community" sounds good and many schools have labeled their teacher meetings as professional learning communities; however, they have failed to implement many of the key elements that make a school team a true professional learning community.

A professional learning community has:

- a common vision and goals
- a culture of high expectations

Professional Learning Community

The professional learning community is characterized by supportive and shared leadership, values, and vision; collective learning and the application of that learning; and conditions that enable the group to meet regularly to solve problems and make decisions.

Simply calling something a professional learning community does not necessarily result in professional learning.

- a commitment to joint leadership development
- processes for shared decision making
- data for making decisions
- a focus on teaching and learning
- a commitment to continuous professional learning

Before a professional learning community can move very far into personal development and influencing instruction within a school, the team should spend time clarifying the school vision and mission, and developing a set of shared values. From that vision and mission, the school can develop specific goals it wishes to accomplish, with a subset of goals that relate directly to the professional learning community. Obviously, the professional learning community's goals should be consistent with the overall school's goals.

A professional learning community only works if there are clear and high expectations. A general dissatisfaction with the status quo and an enthusiasm for constantly looking at ways in which staff can improve helps to fuel the development of such a community. Staff should:

- be willing to confront problems and personal weaknesses
- ask difficult questions
- respect and support one another as individuals
- work as colleagues
- be courageous to question ineffective practices
- be comfortable modeling effective practices for one another
- seek to learn from one another
- be open to continuous monitoring of their success and feedback from others

A culture of high expectations also includes taking time to celebrate achievements.

An ongoing process of a professional learning community is rotating leadership responsibilities as it continues to focus on preparing the next generation of school leaders.

Leadership is a key aspect of a professional learning community. The Quadrant D Leadership model offers an effective opportunity for the team to see over time how they can increase the density of leadership to include not only teachers, but also students, and how they can raise school expectations to include all student needs. The model for leadership should inspire all participants to contribute actively and support one another as they acquire leadership skills. An ongoing process of a professional learning community is rotating leadership responsibilities as it continues to focus on preparing the next generation of school leaders.

Not all decisions in a professional learning community are easy or obvious. Different points of view may make reaching decisions difficult. In order for professional learning community to operate effectively, it must first establish a set of norms and procedures under which it will operate, as well as specific procedures on how to reach a consensus and make a decision. It may be necessary for the professional learning community team to spend time on acquiring discussion, analysis, and reflection skills to lead with quality decisions. The most important criteria for decision making is how such a community will benefit students and increase student achievement.

Careful Attention to Data

More schools today are recognizing the importance of data-driven decisions — to the extent that the term is becoming a bit of a cliché. Decisions made by a professional learning community must be based on data. The goals to which the community aspires should reflect specific, quantifiable data indicators. Indicators do not have to be limited to state test scores, but they must be quantifiable. District data should be timely and reflect areas of student achievement in which teams can dig deeply to identify both curriculum that students have yet to master and students who may need additional intervention. The community should be careful not to base decisions on single indicators of student achievement, but instead to consider multiple measures, which provide additional points of view in identifying achievement. It is common knowledge that a single test score may not accurately reflect a level of student achievement.

Perhaps the most important aspect that has come from the recent federal accountability requirements is the expectation to disaggregate data. Rather than looking at whole school averages, subgroups should be analyzed to learn how well students are performing. It is important to look at trends in data and the achievement of students over time, not just at a single point in time. When the community is analyzing student achievement data, it must be cautious not to jump to quick solutions, but to probe deeply to identify root causes that may underlie an aspect of student performance. For example, reading issues may affect student achievement in social studies or science; the solution may be not modifying a science strategy, but focusing on reading in the content area to improve reading skills for those particular students.

Perhaps the most important aspect of federal accountability requirements is the expectation to disaggregate data. Rather than looking at whole school averages, subgroups should be analyzed to learn how well students are performing.

Focus on Teaching and Learning

The reason for having a professional learning community is not the comfortable sharing of new ideas and professional learning; the purpose is to increase student achievement. The focus has to be on *teaching and learning*, not improving working conditions or deciding on a master schedule and teacher assignments. The school community must ensure that instruction is focused on priority standards, and that student expectations reflect high rigor and high relevance for all students. Is the selection of instructional strategies and design assessments consistent with that expectation? Student-centered instructional strategies will be more likely to increase student engagement that will enable students to reach high levels of achievement.

Professional learning is not a temporary effort or event that occurs randomly and then one hopes it never returns. Professional development is an integral, ongoing part of teaching and effective schools. The professional learning community can contribute significantly to changing the school culture to make professional development less of a formal and more of a pervasive process in which all individuals are constantly acquiring new skills and reflecting on their practice. A professional learning community as a professional development activity needs to be evaluated as any form of professional learning is evaluated — assessing the impact on student achievement as a result of the professional learning community activities and assessing the implementation of new strategies as a result of professional learning discussions.

Districts that want to engage educators in a professional learning community need to find the time for a professional learning community.

Building and sustaining a professional learning community takes time. If staff think that professional development needs to be added to their other work responsibilities, or if they think that engagement in a professional learning community is another burden on their already overburdened schedules, then a professional learning community can never take shape. International School of the Americas, in San Antonio, Texas, has a rotating system of weekly late arrivals. Students arrive at school 90 minutes later each Wednesday. The school uses these weekly meeting times for a rotation of four separate team activities. One week is the professional learning community in which they follow the Critical Friends Group model. Another week is the full staff meeting run by administrators, a third week is department meetings, and the fourth week is grade level team meetings.

Schools and districts with underlying trust issues or with a history of ineffective or adversarial relationships may need to build trust before attempting to build a professional learning community. Simply creating a professional learning community will not instantly solve trust issues.

In many professional learning communities, teachers visit each other's classrooms and discuss what they observe. Leaders need to develop ways to ensure that these observations and conversations are always constructive, not evaluative. As a basic rule, no educator should ever be asked to report on what he or she observed to an administrator, even in "neutral" terms, nor should educators share criticisms of each other's work.

While professional learning communities are relatively new, these well-established practices can be found throughout the world. Teachers in other nations use a substantial portion of their time planning instruction, working with colleagues, observing instruction in other classrooms, and working with individual students.

Professional learning communities are places where all of the important components of teachers' jobs are honored and accommodated for during the school day. When teachers work in communities that value and support their professional needs, higher student achievement results.

Professional learning
communities are about
educators helping
educators.

Tools for Professional Learning Communities

Two tools for assisting with professional learning communities are provided in this section.

- Typical Activities for Professional Learning Communities
- Professional Learning Communities Necessary Conditions Checklist



Typical Activities for Professional Learning Community

- ✓ Establishing a sense of urgency and sharing data on student achievement and a vision for higher expectations for students
- ✓ Creating a shared understanding in the school community about the goals and commitment to improve instruction and student learning
- ✓ Establishing the behavioral and procedural norms by which teacher teams meet and solve problems
- ✓ Reviewing the strengths and gaps in student achievement by analyzing student achievement data
- ✓ Using data to establish targets for each grade level subject area or cores
- ✓ Setting individual student growth targets for groups of students
- ✓ Determining the areas of greatest need where the most significant gaps are in student achievement
- ✓ Creating a process for monitoring each student's progress and making this information available within the school community
- ✓ Reviewing standards-based curriculum to identify where priority learning standards need the greatest emphasis
- ✓ Reviewing and/or creating curriculum maps to determine the allocation of standards across grade levels
- ✓ Committing to strategies to improve formative assessments for students working toward standards
- ✓ Identified eight typical examples of student work to be produced to demonstrate proficiency
- ✓ Establishing schoolwide grading principles and procedures to ensure that grading encourages student engagement and high levels of student work



Professional Learning Communities Necessary Conditions Checklist

Yes	No	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Staff members in the building have collectively expressed a genuine interest in forming professional learning communities.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	There is a commitment by building and district leadership to support and sustain effective professional learning communities.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Data and research about professional learning communities have been collected and communicated to building staff.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Staff understand and agree to the purpose of developing effective professional learning communities and the purpose is connected to the school's improvement plan.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Time to collaborative effectively has been identified and worked into the existing schedule.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	School schedules and structures are being addressed to reduce isolation.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Effective communication strategies have been established.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Barriers have been identified and a plan is in place to remove any that may get in the way of effective professional learning communities.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A budget for implementing and sustaining effective professional learning communities has been established.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Staff have established operating procedures, ground rules, protocols, and team norms for engaging in meaningful professional learning communities.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Staff have identified indicators that can used to measure the successful implementation and operation of the professional learning community.

Case Study of Frank L. Stanton Elementary School

Frank L. Stanton Elementary School, in Atlanta, Ga., is an example of a school that uses a professional learning community effectively.

Frank L. Stanton Elementary School in southwest Atlanta opened in 1927. In 1999, it underwent major renovations to house additional classrooms, a cafeteria, a media center, and a multipurpose room. Stanton serves approximately 300 K-5 students. The student population is comprised of 99% African-American and 1% Caucasian, and 97% receive free/reduced lunch. A full 91% of the students are reading at grade level; it successfully met AYP.

Title I funds assist the school in providing professional development for staff members and purchasing assessment tools, books, technology, education software, and a plethora of instructional materials to meet the needs of students, parents, and staff. The faculty includes 18 classroom teachers; one media specialist; one instructional liaison specialist (lead teacher); one part-time counselor; two curriculum facilitators (school reform and reading); two paraprofessionals; one teacher each for physical education, Spanish for grades 4 and 5, part-time art, part-time music; and the principal. All staff are highly qualified as outlined by NCLB and the State of Georgia. The average teaching experience at Stanton is 15 years. The faculty also has three retired teacher tutors who taught at the school for more than 30 years. These staff members have taught many current residents' grandparents, parents, and their children. Four of the current staff members attended school at Stanton. The parents trust the school with their children and know that the school is equipped with the necessary tools to help students reach their full academic and social abilities.

The staff, parents, community partners, and all who enter the building describe Stanton as a warm, student-centered, inviting, focused, and family-oriented environment, all of which contribute to the school's success. Other key elements that make the school a model of success include professional learning communities (PLCs), school reform models, Co-nect Schools (its name has been changed to Pearson Achievement Solutions), the mentoring and tutoring program for Helping One Student to Succeed (HOSTS), collaboration with community and business partners, and the Title I Parenting Center that is designed for parents to use during the school day and after school hours.

Instructional Leadership — Quadrant D Leadership Practices

In the 2004-05 school year, Atlanta Public Schools charged all of its schools with the task of implementing PLCs on all grade levels in order to provide teachers with the opportunity to share, plan, and reflect as a team at one common time in an effort to increase student achievement, teacher effectiveness, and collaboration. DuFour and Eaker's, *Professional Learning Communities at Work* started the learning process about the implementation of PLCs. They were structured by developing the school's mission, vision, and values, which are shared with all stakeholders of the school community. Each grade's PLC meets once a week for two hours. During this time, students participate in a special area course, such as art, music, physical education, Spanish, or media. In PLCs, staff discuss, review, develop, and/or analyze assessments and their results, determine approaches to delivering best practices and instructional strategies, identify professional development needs, conduct and/or partake in professional training, create curriculum units, participate in book studies, conduct observations of peers, or coach peers. The school continuously engages in crucial conversations to answer the questions: "What is our fundamental purpose?" "What do we hope to achieve?" "What are our strategies for becoming better?" "What criteria will we use to assess our improvement efforts?"

DuFour, R. and Eaker,
R. *Professional Learning
Communities at Work:
Best Practices for
Enhancing Student
Achievement*

As a result of the school's success with grade-level PLCs, collaboration also occurs across grade levels, after school during staff meetings (staff meetings are used for professional training, not only for information sharing), and with other schools. The PLCs have allowed not only teachers to be empowered, but students as well, as teachers have moved from activities that focus on "of learning" to "for learning." Student achievement and attendance have increased tremendously. Students and teachers own their work and take pride in their accomplishments and abilities.

Stiggins, R., Arter,
J., Chappuis, J., and
Chappuis, S. *Classroom
Assessment for Student
Learning: Doing It
Right –Using It Well.*

Remaining focused on student achievement allows the needs of all students to be met through differentiation of instruction as dictated by assessment data. Once students have mastered specific standards/skills, teachers are able to continue "working on the work." If students need practice on a skill, additional instruction, or extension activities to help enhance their grasp and mastery of skills, differentiated instruction is used. Instruction is delivered to meet the needs of students performing on different levels through tiered lessons, peer teaching, independent study, and direct instruction. Strategies also used are whole group instruction, small group instruction, peer tutoring, teacher tutoring, mentoring, use of

Marzano, R. J. *What Works in Schools: Translating Research into Action.*

U.S. National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future*

Through the school's leadership approach, teachers and students take ownership of their learning and the success of the total school program.

Crane, T. *The Heart of Coaching*

learning centers, cooperative learning, skill-based learning, individualized learning, teacher feedback, homework and practice, questioning cues, graphic organizers, and note-taking.

For real academic success to occur, both teachers and administrators must understand the nature of leadership and the complex systems in which leadership is exercised. Therefore, the staff pondered the question, "When do teachers receive preparation for leading?" As the principal often says, "I quickly realized that I had to share my leadership skills to empower teachers to take initiatives and risks, to make effective decisions for students and the total school program, and to sustain academic success throughout the year." Teachers are given opportunities to become experts in their field by not only attending professional development training, but also by sharing the learned information with colleagues during a staff meeting or in a PLC. A report issued by the U.S. National Commission on Teaching and America's Future points out that teacher expertise is the single most important factor in determining student achievement, and that teachers must have access to high-quality professional development.

Stanton builds leaders through Leadership and Data Teams as they conduct instructional focus walks, serve on numerous committees that require shared decision making, spearhead programs and student activities, and serve as grade level chairpersons. The school believes in developing their own, as they are intelligent, knowledgeable, and resourceful professionals. Through the school's leadership approach, teachers and students take ownership of their learning and the success of the total school program.

Stanton is also developing peer coaching and observation as a tool to identify individual and collective needs. Peer coaching and observations are beneficial not only to the individual being observed, but also to the individual observing. If coaching is done in a trusting, instructive manner, people feel helped by the coach and the process. This coaching process is the foundation for creating a true high performance, feedback-rich culture. Not only does the school build teacher capacity, it also builds student capacity. Student leaders meet with guests, answer questions about the school and their work, and serve as tour guides during visits. Allowing students to take part in this process provides them with additional ways to enhance their communication and social skills, answer

Instructional Leadership — Quadrant D Leadership Practices

impromptu questions, learn about others and how to work with them in the world in which they live, and build their level of confidence.

The school's mission is to ensure that all students that are promoted possess a knowledge base that will enable them to be successful citizens and lifelong learners. Its goal is to ensure that students possess the skills necessary to pursue careers that accentuate their talents, as they become productive members of the community. The school creates a safe and disciplined environment for all members of the school community and utilizes necessary resources, such as community partners and parents, to achieve their mission.

The school's vision is to create a rich environment through collaborative planning and professional development that is research-based and data-driven, in order to promote student achievement. It values active engagement in ongoing professional growth in an effort to provide effective instruction for students. Through peer coaching and other strategies utilized to build leaders, the students experience and maintain academic success.

All stakeholders share and know their mission, vision, and core values and beliefs. The school communicates the mission, vision, and values, as well as results from various assessments and student performance, during PTA meetings, local School Council meetings, and on school bulletin boards. Their community/business partners (Equifax, Kaufman Realty Group, Morehouse College, Spelman College, Clark Atlanta University, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, and Courageous Church) are kept informed during quarterly meetings.

Accolades and accomplishments, such as the 2008 National Blue Ribbon School award and the Georgia School of Excellence recognition, are posted on the marquee at the front of the school. Before statewide results are shared with stakeholders, the Administrative, Data, and Leadership Teams review and analyze the results to be certain that the explanation to students, parents, and the community is clear, concise, and accurate.

Students are kept abreast of the school's goals and of their performance by continual teacher-student communication and conferences in the classroom. Teachers conference with individual students to share their test and assessment results. Students are made aware daily of their

Before an assignment is given, students and teachers develop rubrics as another method of measurement; in the process they establish a student ownership of high expectations and quality work.

levels of performance, and their strengths and weaknesses. Before an assignment is given, students and teachers develop rubrics as another method of measurement; in the process they establish a student ownership of high expectations and quality work.

To keep parents advised of students' daily progress, weekly progress reports are sent home and performance information is shared during parent-teacher conferences and end-of-semester award programs. The school sends results from statewide assessments home to parents. Teachers schedule meetings with parents to explain how to read test scores and to discuss what the numbers mean.

Stanton's accomplishments include:

- 2007 and 2009 "No Excuses" School for High Academic Achievement, Georgia Public Policy Foundation
- 2008 National Blue Ribbon School
- 2007 Georgia School of Excellence
- Governor's 2007 Statewide Platinum Award for Great Gains in Student Achievement
- Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for seven consecutive years
- Title I Distinguished School for nine consecutive years





Chapter 10

Data-Driven Instructional Leadership

Data Changes the Ways We Live and Work

Data, and its importance to the instructional improvement process, has been mentioned throughout this resource kit. School leaders cannot make much progress in instructional improvement without the effective use of data. This chapter summarizes some of the good leadership practices involved in making instructional improvement a data-driven process.

Data Standardizes Experiences

Data enables us to standardize our experiences. For example, we all react differently to weather and may use subjective terms to describe weather that is warm, cool, rainy, or cloudy. By using data, we have standardized weather experiences by identifying specific temperatures and predictions for temperatures. We have refined our ability to describe weather further by adding quantifiable values for phenomena such as wind chills and the severity of tornadoes and hurricanes.

Data Standardizes Transactions

The use of data is so commonplace in our transactions that we often take it for granted. Our monetary system is based upon standard quantities, which make it easier to place values on goods and services and to negotiate transactions when buying and selling. Think about how difficult it would be to select a job with only vague notions of what the salary might be. Clothing sizing is another example of how data has helped us standardize; we are able to select clothes by size, which makes shopping more efficient.

Data Facilitates Fast and Accurate Communication

Perhaps the greatest advantage of data is to speed communication. Over the years, the development of ZIP codes, telephone numbers, GPS

coordinates, and, now, IP addresses have enabled us to locate where we are and where we want to go. The instant communication of the Internet is possible because of data systems.

Data Enables Evaluation

We are constantly making subjective evaluations about ourselves, others, and our lives. Everything from whether one is having a good day to how strong a friendship is to the attractiveness of a potential new partner is open to a subjective evaluation. Data enables us to quantify evaluative judgments and improve the decision-making process.

In selecting a new automobile, for example, data allows a buyer to evaluate the price, internal space, and miles per gallon fuel efficiency to make informed comparisons and select the most appropriate vehicle to meet his or her needs. When obtaining a mortgage for a new home, homebuyers consider data about interest rates and other costs.

Of course, data is most useful for evaluation when it is interpreted and presented in a straightforward manner. The real estate market bust in recent years is an excellent example of what happens when data is obscured. Through their practices, many finance companies and banks made interpreting data an extremely complex process for prospective homeowners, which made it difficult for buyers to determine the actual cost of a new home. As a result, many homebuyers made decisions to purchase homes beyond their means.

It is difficult, if not impossible, for a school to move toward sustainable change if school leaders do not have a good idea of what is actually happening in their classrooms and with their students. For educators, data is essential for:

- **Planning:** Planning processes are more efficient and effective using data. Imagine trying to open a school without knowing how many students might attend. A school must know the numbers of students as well as the characteristics those students bring to learning. Successful education leaders use data effectively to plan school development and programming to meet student needs.

**Educators
Need Data**

- **Goal setting:** Effective organizations have specific goals that they work toward. In the case of schools, it is essential to establish quantitative measures for what a school expects to accomplish for its students.
- **Progress measurement:** A school can and should periodically measure results to determine where it has been successful and where it needs to strive for greater improvement. Graduate rates and standardized test results are useful, but this data reflects only the outcome of the education process. It does not help schools evaluate the education process and make adjustments to improve upon it before a student's education is completed. It is essential for schools to collect data throughout the education process to better inform the daily decisions that lead to positive outcomes.
- **Evaluation:** Data is used to evaluate various practices and the effectiveness of instruction. When a new initiative is introduced, educators must determine whether it is effective by using data to evaluate results.
- **Communication:** Education serves many constituencies in addition to school staff and students. Schools must communicate with parents, taxpayers, community leaders, state agencies, and the federal government. Having data as part of that communication process not only is efficient, but also is effective in reaching the various stakeholder groups. Data helps schools articulate what is happening in their classrooms.

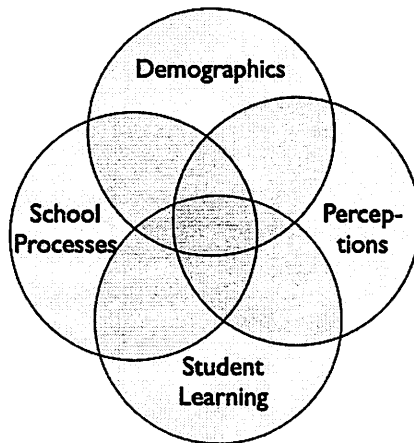
Data Types

Bernhardt, V. *Data analysis for continuous school improvement*

All data is not the same, and the various types fall into several separate categories. Several years ago, Victoria Bernhardt, executive director of Education for the Future, professor, and author of numerous books about data analysis, identified four major categories of data types. Bernhardt's system is now one of the standard categorizations used in education and communications. Effective use of data involves a balance among the four types, and schools will make little progress in improving instruction without achieving this balance. The four data types are:

Demographics includes data that describes the characteristics of students, such as ethnicity, gender, grade level, language proficiency, and socioeconomic groupings.

Four Types of School Data



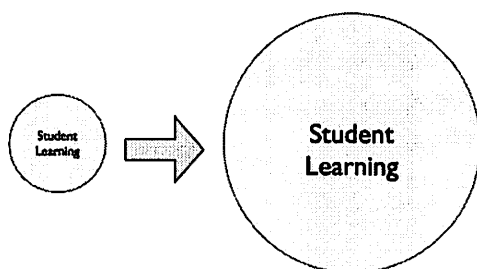
Perceptions includes the results of surveys that quantify the opinions of staff, students, and parents regarding program effectiveness. These surveys might collect feedback about the quality of the school, quantify values and beliefs, or enable observations about the quality of student learning.

School processes includes data relating to the description of school programs and processes, such as the suspension rate, enrollment in career and technical education, or the percentage of students completing service learning requirements.

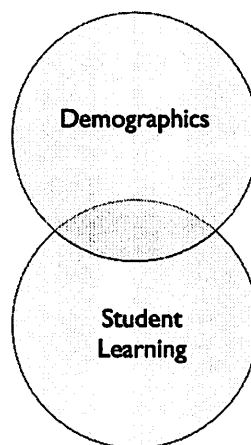
Student learning includes data that demonstrates the levels of student learning. Data might include results from large national assessments such as the ACT or SAT, state assessments, commercial assessments, teacher tests, or industry certification exams.

Student learning is the measurement of results. If the amount of data used to measure results is very small or uses limited measures, leaders will have an unrealistic measurement of student learning. It is similar to the old story of the blind men and the elephant. In the story, the blind person who only feels the elephant's leg, trunk, tail, or body will have very different perceptions of the object.

Increase the Scope of Data with Multiple Measures



Connect Measures to Get a More Precise Picture from Data



To judge the effectiveness of student learning fully, leaders need to use multiple measures of data. The first aspect of effective data use is to expand the scope of data measures used to assess student learning.

The second aspect of using data effectively is to connect demographics and student learning. The disaggregation of student learning by subpopulations of students is a requirement of *No Child Left Behind*. In doing this, leaders get a more precise picture of learning by all students rather than describing learning results by totals that might obscure the fact that many students are not meeting targets.

Looking at student learning and demographics alone does not inform school staff about what or how to measure to determine whether initiatives are making a positive change. By collecting and analyzing data about school processes and perceptions, leaders have a more complete picture of learning results and the progress that has been made toward achieving those results.

The following are important strategies that educators should use in data-driven instructional improvement.

Analyze Forces of Change

An important context for instructional leadership is establishing a sense of purpose and urgency to address instructional issues. Data regarding the environment, including demographic changes, social changes, economic changes, and technology, is useful in quantifying the driving forces to which educators must respond. For example, the percentage of minority students in K-12 schools in 2007 was 40%. By 2023, it is estimated that the rate will exceed 50%. With the knowledge this data provides, schools can begin long-range planning to address the needs of this increasing population of students.

Identify Student Learning Needs

To better understand the students who are coming through the front doors of the school, educators can use various assessments and surveys to quantify student learning needs. The processes for identifying learning disabilities and the needs of English language learners have become very sophisticated. Knowing as much as possible about incoming students ensures that schools are better able to support unique learning needs. For example, the number of English language learners has doubled in the last 15 years. Schools whose students increasingly have these needs must have strategies in place for supporting their success.

Set Student Learning Goals

Education is more effective when schools identify specific goals for students. These goals can be quantified in terms of state assessments, reading levels, or graduation requirements. Schools should communicate learning expectations to students and parents. For example, a school might set the expectation that every high school graduate will read at a Lexile level of at least 1200L. Data tracking will enable the school to adjust instruction to help achieve that goal.

Set School Goals

Once a school has set learning goals for individual students, they can aggregate the goals that they have as an entire school community. This

Data Strategies

creates ambitious expectations as to the number of students who will meet benchmarks in reading or the requirements for graduation. Schools might also set goals for achievement in individual programs, such as for students completing career and technical education programs or for students taking advanced courses in math, science, and technology. A good example of a school goal is for the graduation rate for a cohort entering the high school to be 95%.

Set Individual Goals

After a school has established overall school goals, individual teachers can see their role in working toward those goals and set personal goals. They might set goals for student achievement within their individual courses or goals that are part of efforts to help a grade level group of students to achieve. A teacher may set a goal that 95% of his or her 9th grade algebra class will pass and be prepared for algebra 2. Collecting data through tests and other evaluations allows the teacher to address obstacles to achieving that goal.

Analyze School Practices

As schools seek to improve instructional practices, they can use data to analyze patterns in achievement. For example:

- Where are students having the greatest successes or the greatest challenges?
- Are individual teachers achieving greater results with specific students?
- Which students are having difficulty?
- Are there differences in student performance over time or within individual subjects?

By comparing data and looking at trends, educators can begin to identify strengths and areas in need of improvement. For example, data may allow a school to make a correlation, such as 80% of students missing five or more days of school are failing at least one class, and then develop strategies to address the problem.

Test Hypotheses

School leaders need continuously to seek solutions that will meet the unique learning needs within their school. Practices that are highly successful in one school may not be successful in another. Every innovation that is put into place with an expectation for improvement should have a hypothesis as to how it will improve learning results. Data collection around the results of an intervention or change can highlight whether to expand, modify, or abandon a particular innovation. For example, a school may wish to consider the hypothesis: Do students taking honors English and regular English have an equal chance of achieving a score of 18 on the ACT? Data will help them answer this question.

Quantify Perceptions

Not every aspect of evaluating the quality of schools can be measured by a student assessment. There are nuances of success in learning that do not show up in standardized tests. Data around these perceptions is equally important in making judgments about what is working and what needs to be changed. Educators can quantify these perceptions with well constructed surveys that examine the perceptions about what is or is not working and effective in schools. For example, the *We Learn* – Student Survey shows that only 62% of students have a teacher with whom they feel they can confide or share problems. Knowing this, how can a school leader work with staff to strengthen relationships between students and teachers?

Opinion-based Versus Data-driven Decision Making

The following chart compares opinion-based, or subjective, decision making with more objective data-driven decision making. Using data consistently leads to improved decision making.

Opinion-based Versus Data-driven Decision Making

Opinion- and Tradition-based Decision Making	Data-Driven Decision Making
The top priority is maintaining the status quo.	The top priority is achieving goals and results.
Budgetary decisions are based on prior practice, priority programs.	Budget allocations to programs are based on data-informed needs.
Staff assignments are based on interest and availability.	Staff assignments are based on student needs as indicated by data.
Reports to the community focus on school events and individual stories.	Organized reports to the community focus on student learning progress.
Goal setting is based on favorite initiatives or fads.	Goal setting is based on data about student needs.
Staff meetings focus on operations and the dissemination of information.	Staff meetings focus on strategies and issues raised by the local school's data.
Staff development programs are scattered.	School uses focused staff development programs as an improvement strategy to address documented problems and needs.
Parent communication is limited to open houses and occasional newsletters.	Parent communication regarding their children's progress is frequent and often online.
The grading system is based on each teacher's criteria of acceptable work.	The grading system is based on common student-performance criteria that are keyed to progress on the standards.
Periodic administrative team meetings focus solely on operations.	Administrative team meetings focus on measured progress toward data-based improvement goals.

The suggestions that follow can help schools become more effective as they collect and analyze student data.

Collecting and Analyzing Student Data

Count Carefully

The data a school collects conveys what is important. This sounds simple enough, but problems can occur when emphasis is placed on process data rather than achievement data. For example, one school tried to improve reading scores by rating teachers on the number of minutes per day their students spent reading. This was taken to an extreme, and classrooms were ranked on the number of minutes of reading with rewards for the highest numbers. This emphasis led to a disproportionate amount of time spent on reading without real improvement in reading ability. The data collected led the school to focus on that single variable. If data is measuring process rather than results, school leaders should be sure that the data correlates to achievement.

Look at Distribution, Not Averages

Averages are the most frequently used and abused statistics. Averages give us a single number that makes comparison easy — perhaps too easy. For example, if the average SAT score of students at school A is 1050, and the average at school B is 1100, it appears that students in school B are performing at a higher level. However, there may be many more individual students in school A who achieve at high levels than in school B. Averages do not reveal this information. The total distribution of actual scores gives a better picture of the achievement of all students. Looking at distribution reveals the number of high performing students, which could be a source of information for effective learning practices. Similarly, looking at the students at the low end of the distribution will reveal who needs the most attention.

Disaggregate

Just as distributions offer revealing statistics, disaggregation reveals a more accurate picture of total student performance than averages and can expose groups of students who require extra support. Dividing total

student scores into subgroups by such categories as gender, teacher assignment, ethnic group, number of years in district, and attendance rate can help to pinpoint the needs of student subgroups.

Study Trends

One of the other dangers of relying on any single data source is that these numbers are “snapshots in time.” Yet, because many factors may distort one simple average, it is better to look at changes over time. Trends provide a more accurate picture than isolated numbers. School leaders must take care never to place a great deal of emphasis on a single number.

Collect Data to Answer Questions

Schools often collect some data and then try to decide what to do with it. This is backwards. The most useful data is collected to answer specific questions. For example, a district planning committee that wants to assess writing achievement might ask the question, “How well do our students write?” The first step would be to look for existing data elements related to students’ writing. Then, if needed, the committee can develop additional measures, such as feedback from former students, scores on writing exams, numbers of students participating in writing contests, or the amount of instructional time spent on writing.

Use Technology

Increasingly, technology is playing a critical role in the compilation and analysis of education data. An article in *Education Week’s* Technology Counts 2006 report shows that the nation has made dramatic progress in developing computerized data systems that can reliably guide education decision making. However, there is still plenty of work to do before those systems reach their potential to accelerate student achievement. In a survey of the 50 states and the District of Columbia, two-thirds of states provide educators with access to interactive databases through which they can analyze school-level information, according to the article. Twenty states have data systems that allow educators to compare their

“The Information Edge:
Using Data to Accelerate
Achievement.” *Technology
Counts 2006*

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schools with others that have similar characteristics. Slightly more than half the states provide access to student test performance results over time through a web portal or other centralized data tool.

Make Data Understandable

Anyone can become overwhelmed when confronted by large groups of numbers. When organizing data for education planning groups, fewer is better, and pictures can convey more than numbers. When presenting findings, school leaders should limit the amount of data to what is absolutely needed and convert numbers into charts to show trends when possible. Pie charts, bar graphs, or line drawings are more meaningful to many people than tables full of numbers.

Go Deeper

Looking at initial data should inspire further questions and a deeper analysis to achieve greater levels of understanding of student performance or education processes. Schools that use data regularly in the decision-making process continue to expand the breadth and depth of data collected. This allows them to develop a fuller picture of the learning that is taking place in their schools.

Becoming More Data Driven

Strategies for district leaders to support data-driven instruction and improve their own data skills

- ▶ ask for and post public displays of data visibly in schools
- ▶ ask data-driven questions of leadership teams
- ▶ ask students to quantify their learning progress
- ▶ ask teachers to cite data to indicate how they gauge student learning
- ▶ use charts and graphs to reduce data to useful information by focusing on simple numbers, gaps comparisons, and trends
- ▶ ask frequent questions to ensure data accuracy

Instructional Questions to Answer with Data

Thoughtful data collection can yield a wealth of useful information to fuel instructional change. Chapters 4 through 9 explored the three-step process to instructional change: (1) creating a context, (2) defining a specific target, and (3) developing an array of instructional leadership practices. One way that instructional leaders can begin to think about data collection is by considering the questions they would like to answer about teaching and learning in their school.

Context

Context involves creating an environment for instructional improvement. Data will help an instructional leader answer any number of questions that speak to context, including:

- What is the level of staff relationships?
- Do the structure and organization of teacher teams drive or inhibit instructional improvement?
- What are the school's learning goals for students?

Target

Data is integral to establishing a specific focus for instructional improvement. Questions about target that data can answer include:

- What are the priority standards for student learning?
- What is the expected level of student literacy?
- What is the level of rigor and relevance in instruction?
- How well planned is instruction?
- How well is instruction personalized to meet students' unique needs?
- What is the level of student engagement?

Practices

Instructional change requires taking an integrated approach and using multiple practices to achieve desired results. In developing effective practices, instructional leaders identify needed data, establish protocols

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for collecting it, and use it to evaluate progress continuously. Some questions instructional leaders may consider for these processes include:

- What is the degree to which administrative policies, budgets, teacher assignments, and evaluations drive or inhibit meeting instructional targets?
- What do the results of student assessments show regarding areas of additional learning needs?
- What are the achievement patterns among various student subgroups?
- To what degree do common and benchmark assessments inform teachers about the quality of instruction?
- To what degree do empowerment practices have impacts on student achievement and increasing staff relationships?
- How much input and responsibility do students perceive they have in school decisions?
- To what degree are vision practices building a common vision that all staff support?
- How have academic intervention practices increased student learning?
- What are the instructional impacts of peer improvement efforts among faculty, such as coaching, review of student work, celebrations, and professional learning communities?
- What is the degree to which grading practices drive or inhibit instructional improvement?

Without data, you are
just another person with
an opinion.

Available from the International Center for Leadership in Education, the following tools may be helpful to instructional leaders as they work toward instructional change in their schools.

**International
Center Data
Resources**

Student Learning

Learning Criteria to Support 21st Century Learners

Working with a dozen national education groups representing many constituencies, the International Center has developed a comprehensive

For more on Learning Criteria, please see Chapter 4

set of criteria — Foundation Learning, Stretch Learning, Learner Engagement, and Personal Skill Development — to help schools with their improvement efforts. School leaders can use the Learning Criteria to determine their success in preparing students for current assessments as well as for future roles and responsibilities.

Lexile Framework® for Reading

The Lexile Framework for Reading, developed collaboratively by the International Center and MetaMetrics, is a scientifically based measure of student achievement that links assessment with instruction, fosters better education practices, and improves learning by enabling teachers to match students with materials that not only meet, but also challenge, students' abilities. Using this framework, teachers, parents, and students can measure improvement of essential reading comprehension over time.

Perceptions

We Survey Suite

More on the *We Survey* suite can be found in Chapter 4.

The *We Survey* suite, developed by the Successful Practices Network in partnership with the International Center, is an easy-to-use tool that can provide insight into the levels of rigor, relevance, and relationships in a school. These surveys reveal student and teacher perceptions of the learning environment and staff perceptions of school leadership, all of which can provide direction for increasing student achievement. The suite includes four surveys: (1) *We Learn* – Student Survey, (2) *We Teach* – Instructional Staff Survey, (3) *We Lead* – Whole Staff Survey, and (4) *We Support* – Family/Community Survey.

Process

Curriculum Matrix

The Curriculum Matrix is a priority rating to each state standard in English, mathematics, science, and social studies based on the emphasis given to that standard on state tests. Standards are also crosswalked to the

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National Essential Skills Study (NESS), which ranks the importance of curriculum in the subjects relative to what graduates need for success in adult life. From this data, teachers can easily identify which standards and benchmarks are most important.

Effectiveness and Efficiency Framework

This International Center framework helps educators determine cost (efficiency), define student performance (effectiveness), and compare the relationship between the two. Using these analytical strategies, schools can begin to develop a repertoire of effective, cost-efficient practices and procedures that can substantially improve student performance.

Rigor/Relevance Framework®

The Rigor/Relevance Framework is a simple yet powerful tool that uses the Knowledge Taxonomy and an application model to quantify the level of rigor and relevance in teaching and learning to assist teachers in planning curriculum, designing instruction, and developing assessments in efforts to improve students' academic achievement.



Chapter 11

District Role in Instructional Leadership

Challenge of Creating Quadrant D Leadership Schools

Quadrant D Leadership offers the potential to create new and effective relationships between districts and schools, but only if both levels embrace the model.

Large Districts Versus Small Districts

A school is the essential organization that creates student learning. Quadrant D Leadership describes the organizational leadership that can exist in a school community to create a culture of high expectations, high quality instruction, and high levels of student achievement. Most schools function within a district that handles the majority of the administrative tasks regarding legal and financial processes and issues. The dynamics between district leadership and school leadership are critical in creating Quadrant D Leadership. Quadrant D Leadership cannot be created by edict; it must be inspired and nurtured delicately by district actions.

When school districts embrace the Quadrant D Leadership model, district leaders gain a clearer vision of what effective leadership looks like. This can guide daily interactions with school staff. Quadrant D Leadership offers the potential to create new and effective relationships between districts and schools, but only if both levels embrace the model. This chapter describes some of the functions and initiatives that a school district should undertake to build Quadrant D Leadership for instructional improvement in its schools.

States vary considerably regarding the organization of school districts. In many states, school districts are independent entities that do not follow other political boundaries, and they vary from very large city districts to tiny rural districts. In some states, a group of smaller communities is served by a countywide district. Regardless of the overall district structure in any state, there are important differences between small and large districts across the United States.

In the context of this chapter, large districts are described as having multiple high schools and at least dozens of elementary and middle schools feeding into those high schools. In small districts — those that have only one high school or even just one school building — it is much easier to establish a district culture for instructional improvement that is consistent with the school's culture. This is because there are usually strong communication links between the district superintendent, other

district administrators, and school administrators. The greatest challenges to Quadrant D Leadership are in larger districts, and the recommendations outlined in the rest of this chapter apply to these districts.

The challenges in establishing school culture from a district perspective arise when there are dozens or even hundreds of schools. For districts that encompass a large geographic area, there may be significant population variations in terms of the racial, ethnic, and/or socioeconomic backgrounds among the communities served. Large districts do have an advantage, because they tend to have more resources to devote to instructional improvement. Usually, they can afford more sophisticated data systems and more professional development than smaller districts. However, schools in large districts may struggle to balance individual community needs in the context of the district's overall goals.

Schools in large districts may struggle to balance individual community needs in the context of the district's overall goals.

An interesting way to look at district-level instructional leadership practices is to examine some of the common pitfalls that school districts experience as they try to improve schools.

District Initiative Pitfalls

Leaving Schools Alone

One common leadership problem districts encounter occurs when leadership from a district perspective is abandoned and responsibility for leadership is left to individual schools. As can be expected with such an approach, results vary greatly. At one end of the spectrum, school leaders and communities may take on aggressive initiatives to improve instruction and student achievement. At the other end of the continuum, schools may strive to maintain the status quo and keep operating on an even keel and within the budget. In these schools, there is little sense of urgency, and leadership tends to resist any outside initiatives from district leaders.

Treating All Schools the Same

Perhaps the most pervasive pitfall for districts — especially for large school districts — is treating all schools the same. All students are not the same, and groups of students within an individual community may vary greatly. All teachers are not the same either. Teaching is a highly

One of the biggest mistakes a district can make is treating all of its schools the same.

In trying to improve instruction, districts need to customize the improvement process for each school.

School leaders must have the flexibility to use their best judgment in selecting or modifying suggested practices so that they can address student needs.

personal transactional process. Teachers' personalities combined with student learning needs create literally millions of variations in the learning exchange.

Curriculum standards and research-based practices attempt to standardize high quality instruction; however, these practices cannot be implemented with fidelity in every exchange between students and teachers. It is appropriate for districts to have high expectations for schools, but some schools will be able to meet these expectations more easily than others. Recognizing the fact that most schools have very little control over the background and preparation of their students, many state accountability programs try to take into account the variations among schools. These accountability systems consider socioeconomic backgrounds and other factors when comparing scores and they focus on growth over absolute scores.

In trying to improve instruction, districts need to customize the improvement process for each school. Treating every school in exactly the same manner will lead to great variation in results. Districts should provide adequate supports, but use those supports incrementally to meet the individual schools' needs. For example, mandating a particular instructional practice throughout a school district may show positive results in some schools but not in others.

Focusing on Process Instead of Results

When a district focuses too much on mandating specific practices across all schools instead of focusing on end results, it strips its schools of the ability and responsibility to adapt practices to achieve desired results. Quadrant D Leadership can empower school staff to take greater responsibility for their actions, but if the district mandates very precisely the practices that they want schools to follow, staff are hobbled instead of empowered. This does not mean the district should not provide suggestions, professional development, and encouragement related to instructional practices, but the district must place the responsibility for adapting those practices with the school. This is related to the problems that occur when districts treat all schools in the same way. School leaders must have the flexibility to use their best judgment in selecting or modifying suggested practices so that they can address student needs.

Struggling With Competing Internal Agendas

A major challenge in any district occurs when there are multiple offices pulling in conflicting directions. This is especially true in large districts that maintain large staffs, including curriculum experts and specialists, for improving the performance of specific populations, such as special education and English language learners. All of these program offices work with individual schools. If the district establishes an initiative but multiple offices bring competing agendas to bear upon the schools, this creates tension and conflict. This may result in a school resisting, rather than using, the support and expertise district offices offer. Before a district moves aggressively to influence instruction in schools, it is absolutely essential that each program office understands its role in moving toward the common vision.

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Labeling Schools

Some states and cities identify success in student achievement using simple letter grades, A through F. Some states label schools as “failing” or “needing improvement,” though many would argue that such labels become counterproductive. Just as students who are labeled by their grades, a school may adopt a defeated attitude when labeled as low performing or a “good enough” attitude when labeled as average. The same can be true of highly ranked schools, which may become complacent or smug in their labeling. There is good instruction and there are opportunities to improve instruction in every school.

In addition to improvement labels or grades, schools are also stereotyped by their historical perspective. For example, one school may have a reputation for being focused on college preparation while another may be labeled as serving lower performing students. Labeling schools is counterproductive, and districts should be careful to avoid this practice.

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Moving School Leaders Around

In some districts, moving school leaders around is an effective strategy for improvement. This type of intervention can be positive, especially in a school that has been complacent or that maintains the status quo. A

new principal can provide fresh vision and energy to a particular school environment or an incumbent school administrator may have specific strengths that fit the improvement needs for a particular struggling school.

In some cases, moving school leaders too frequently hinders leadership development. But sometimes, moving school leaders around within a district can infuse new vigor into a complacent school.

However, some schools districts adopt the practice of placing arbitrary limits on the length of time that leaders can be employed within schools. School change takes time and moving leaders too frequently hinders leaders from building upon the relationships that they establish within a particular school. In addition, setting fixed terms can backfire, because a school leader may not recognize changing improvement needs.

Monitoring school leadership is a delicate process, but districts that do so consistently can help determine the best time to make changes in school leadership. An extension of this particular challenge is ensuring that the district is adequately prepared to replace administrators. One way to accomplish this is to implement strategies to develop a cadre of new administrators across the school district. Large districts have an advantage in using this strategy, because there are more positions available and the impacts of moving personnel into different positions may not be felt as keenly as they would be in smaller districts. Moreover, it often is easier for larger districts to set up cost-effective administrative training programs.

Poorly Timed Changes

The old saying that timing is everything certainly applies to in education. Some districts move aggressively to introduce a new program or practice, but they do so without adequate time or preparation to inform staff or conduct training. Implementing significant changes in the middle of a school year or scheduling a new professional development workshop at the last minute are two of the worst timing problems. Making changes after school budgets and teaching responsibilities have been established for the year often leads to ineffective implementation and creates an unnatural resistance from teachers. This does not mean that schools neglect to make midyear adjustments and corrections as needed, but they must take care to commit to new initiatives and ensure that they are funded and supported properly.

Sitting on Data

One of a district's most important support functions is to provide data for leaders and leadership teams so that they may analyze student achievement and monitor progress. Data is only useful if it is timely. Teachers need to be able to pull up the most current data during a team meeting to evaluate student results and identify needs. If there are delays in requesting and receiving data, the information may become useless to the planning process. Likewise, periodic assessment results and data must be made available as quickly as possible so that staff can use it for decision making within the current school year.

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timely.

Standardizing Professional Development for All Schools

An important function for districts is to provide professional learning. Yet, when a district sets a fixed agenda for professional development for all of its schools, it is in danger of slipping into a one-size-fits-all approach. Districts need to provide multiple professional development options that can be tailored for individual schools and delivered as needed.

In supporting schools, districts using the Quadrant D Leadership philosophy must take responsibility for several important instructional leadership functions. These functions relate primarily to personnel and employee contracts, infrastructure for technology support and student data, curriculum content expertise, and professional development for administrators and staff. The key is to provide direction and support without stifling the innovation and staff empowerment necessary to create and sustain culture change in schools.

Instructional Leadership District Practices

Following is a review of the 25 instructional leadership practices with specific suggestions for the important functions that districts must provide to implement and support them effectively.

Management Practices	
Policies and Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ With input from schools, districts must establish districtwide policies to maintain consistency across schools. There should be a continuing process to revise core policies as schools work to implement instructional improvement practices.
Personnel and Budgets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Districts must fully understand laws and regulations governing human resources and communicate these to schools. Districts should train and support school leaders to follow good human resources practices. ▶ Districts should assist in recruiting potential teachers and provide initial screening to help schools with the selection process. ▶ To help schools implement instructional improvement successfully, districts should assist with budgeting, provide resources, and offer flexibility in the use of resources to support initiatives.
School Master Schedule/Teacher Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Districts must establish flexibility in employee contracts to give schools flexibility in assigning teachers to best meet student needs. ▶ Districts should avoid arbitrary staff transfers among schools based on seniority as this reduces schools' options for selecting staff. ▶ To support schools in providing sufficient and effective instructional time, districts should help review and set transportation schedules.
Staff Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ District leaders should eliminate from employee contracts limits regarding staff meetings. ▶ Districts should provide school leaders with training for running effective meetings. ▶ Districts should implement technology and communication strategies to minimize the focus on administrative tasks and increase the focus on instruction in meetings.

Management Practices, continued	
Staff Reviews and Evaluations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ When negotiating employee contracts, districts should establish clear procedures for staff reviews and evaluations. Input from schools and best practices for staff reviews and evaluations should be considered in establishing district requirements. ▶ For all administrators, districts should provide training in how to conduct reviews and evaluations properly and effectively. ▶ To help schools implement state testing programs effectively, districts must maintain an understanding of current state and federal testing requirements. ▶ To support individual schools and their needs, districts should purchase appropriate benchmark and progress monitoring testing programs. ▶ Professional development in creating common benchmark assessments and formative assessment should be provided by the district.
Balanced Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Districts should purchase benchmark assessments. ▶ Districts should purchase and manage systems to maintain assessment data. ▶ Districts should provide training for assessment practices.
Student Achievement Data Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ To ensure that schools and leadership teams have access to high quality data, districts must establish a technology infrastructure and provide adequate software, technical support, and training. ▶ Districts can support the effective use of leadership teams by providing school leaders with professional development in collaborative approaches.

Management practices are discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

Empowerment Practices	
Leadership Teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Districts should negotiate employee contracts that encourage teacher participation on teacher teams. ▶ Staff development on team processes should be provided on a district level.
Mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Districts must examine and negotiate employee contracts that support teacher mentoring initiatives. ▶ Districts should provide training for mentors and offer common professional development workshops, which may be part of an orientation and mentoring program for new teachers.
Co-teaching and Team Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Districts should support co-teaching efforts through professional development and employee contract language that allows for flexible options in creating co-teaching patterns.
Teacher Incentives and Rewards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Districts can assist schools by examining employee contracts to ensure that they specify teacher rewards and recognition. ▶ District-level teacher recognition provides further incentives for staff. ▶ To provide further teacher recognition opportunities, district can develop partnerships with community organizations and businesses.
Teacher Observations and Study Tours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ To facilitate teacher observations and study tours, districts should provide funding and opportunities for classroom visits across schools and support trips to model schools by district teams comprising staff from several different schools.
Individualized Professional Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Districts can help provide funding and support systems for individualized professional learning. This could include a variety of resources, such as online professional development, grant opportunities, or other strategies to offer customized professional development for individual teachers. ▶ By building a rich resource of professional opportunities, districts ensure that there are sufficient professional development activities and that teachers can complete professional learning close to the time that they will apply newly acquired skills.

More information about empowerment practices is available in Chapter 7.

Instructional Leadership — Quadrant D Leadership Practices

Vision Practices	
Vision, Mission, and Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Districts must set a vision and mission that serves as a foundation for each school's specific vision and mission. The visions and missions of the districts and the schools may not be the same, but they must be compatible. ▶ Districts should assist each school with setting specific goals that are related to the school vision and mission and are consistent with the district vision and mission.
Instructional Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Districts must provide and maintain current technology, including devices, software, and connectivity. ▶ Districts should provide technical support to maintain technology systems. ▶ Districts should provide professional development for technology applications.
Rigor/Relevance Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Districts play a supporting role in professional development related to establishing and implementing a specific instructional focus on rigor and relevance. ▶ Districts can provide curriculum specialists to help develop lesson plans or provide technical support related to rigor and relevance.
Needs Assessments and Strategic Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Districts should facilitate needs assessments for the district and each individual school. This may be accomplished by using outside consultants to conduct a needs assessment. ▶ Districts must provide internal or external consultants to facilitate strategic planning for the district and each school.
Classroom Walk-throughs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ In order to establish consistency and preparation for classroom walk-throughs, districts should provide professional development for administrators conducting classroom observations.
Professional Development Workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Districts should obtain and allocate resources to be used in professional development workshops. ▶ District staff or consultants hired by the district should conduct some professional development workshops. ▶ To make it easier for schools to select high quality professional development, districts should establish systems for evaluating it and for collecting data to support evaluation. ▶ Districts should develop a comprehensive professional development plan that: (1) identifies appropriate school responsibilities in conducting professional development and (2) connects goals with the overall district vision and mission.

Chapter 8 includes more detailed information about vision practices.

Culture Practices	
Academic Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Districts should provide professional development for staff involved in providing intervention services. ▶ Instructional resources and software to support school intervention and supplemental instruction initiatives should be purchased by the district. ▶ Districts should negotiate employee contracts to ensure flexibility for schools in providing supplemental services and teacher collaboration to meet student needs.
Instructional Coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Districts must provide training for instructional coaches. ▶ Districts should help facilitate the sharing of best practices among coaches and support coaches in their common work across schools.
Peer Review of Student Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Districts should provide teachers and school leaders with training related to the process of reviewing student work.
Grading Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Establishing districtwide policies that provide a consistent basis for grading, including how grades will be communicated to parents and students, is a key district responsibility. Policies on grading must not inhibit schools from improving their grading practices to increase student engagement and achievement. ▶ Districts should purchase and maintain software that helps facilitate the communication of grades to students and parents.
Celebrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Districts should support celebrations by highlighting these activities in district-level communications to parents and the wider community. ▶ Districts should encourage and support teachers and schools to present at professional development conferences, such as the Model Schools Conference.
Professional Learning Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ District staff or consultants hired by the district should provide training for staff involved in professional learning communities. ▶ Districts should provide data systems to support the professional learning community's data analysis efforts.

A detailed discussion of culture practices can be found in Chapter 9.





Appendix

Overview of the Rigor/Relevance Framework

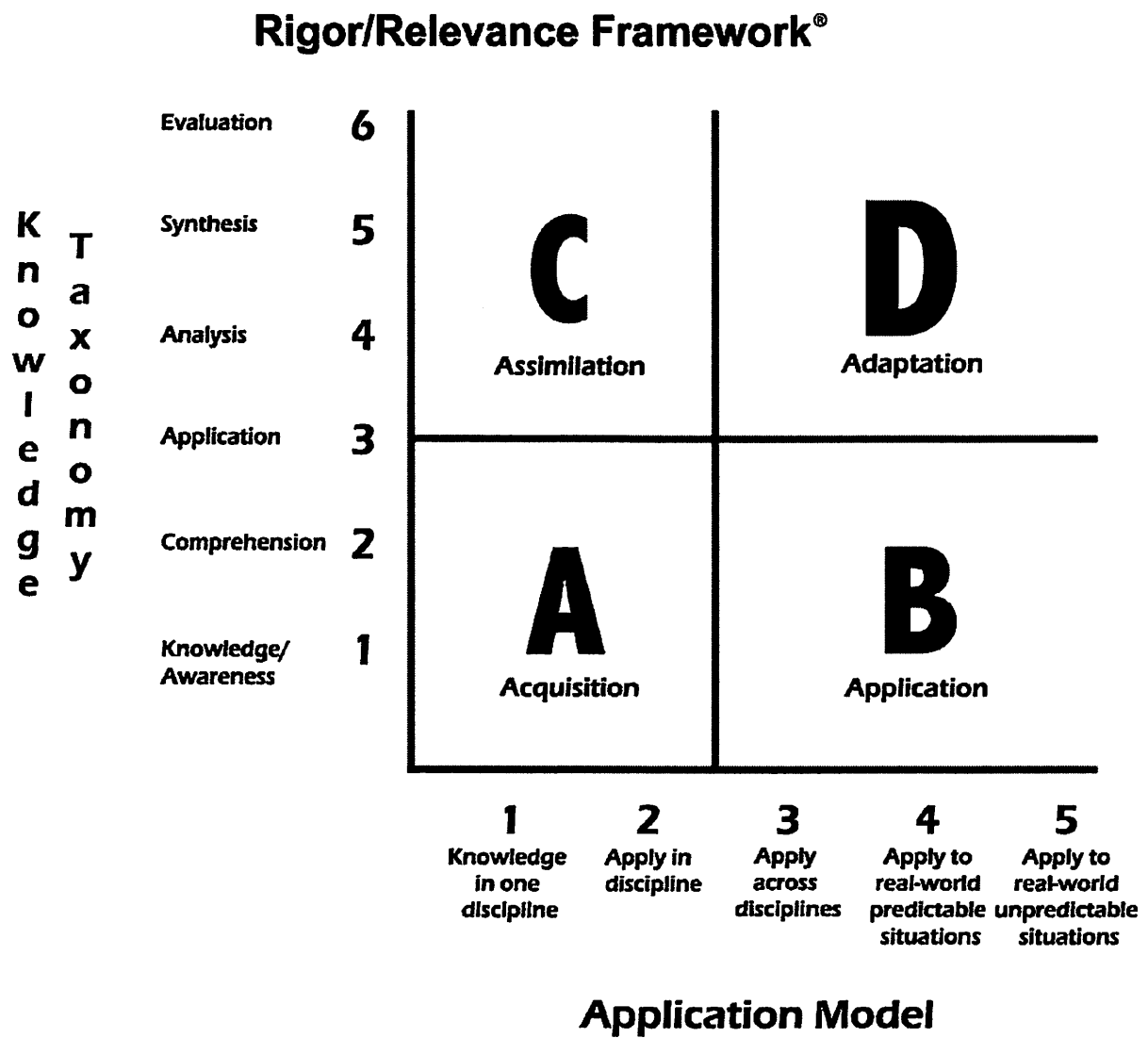
The Rigor/Relevance Framework is a tool developed by staff of the International Center for Leadership in Education to examine curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The Rigor/Relevance Framework is based on two dimensions of higher standards and student achievement.

First, there is a continuum of knowledge that describes the increasingly complex ways in which we think. The Knowledge Taxonomy is based on the six levels of Bloom's Taxonomy: (1) awareness/knowledge, (2) comprehension, (3) application, (4) analysis, (5) synthesis, and (6) evaluation.

The low end of this continuum involves acquiring knowledge and being able to recall or locate that knowledge in a simple manner. Just as a computer completes a word search in a word processing program, a competent person at this level can scan through thousands of bits of information in the brain to locate that desired knowledge.

The high end of the Knowledge Taxonomy labels more complex ways in which individuals use knowledge. At this level, knowledge is fully integrated into one's mind, and individuals can do much more than locate information. They can take several pieces of knowledge and combine them in both logical and creative ways. Assimilation of knowledge is a good way to describe this high level of the thinking continuum. Assimilation is often referred to as a higher-order thinking skill; at this level, the student can solve multistep problems and create unique work and solutions.

The second continuum, known as the Application Model, is one of action. The five levels of this continuum — (1) knowledge in one discipline, (2) apply in discipline, (3) apply across disciplines, (4) apply to real-world predictable situations, and (5) apply to real-world unpredictable situations — describe putting knowledge to use. While the low end is knowledge acquired for its own sake, the high end signifies action — use of that knowledge to solve complex real-world problems and to create projects, designs, and other works for use in real-world situations.



The Rigor/Relevance Framework has four quadrants. Quadrant A represents simple recall and basic understanding of knowledge for its own sake. Quadrant C represents more complex thinking but still knowledge for its own sake. Examples of quadrant A knowledge are knowing that the world is round and that Shakespeare wrote Hamlet.

Quadrant C embraces higher levels of knowledge, such as knowing how the U.S. political system works and analyzing the benefits and challenges of the cultural diversity of this nation versus other nations.

Quadrants B and D represent action or high degrees of application. Quadrant B would include knowing how to use math skills to make purchases and count change. The ability to access information in wide-area network systems and the ability to gather knowledge from a variety of sources to solve a complex problem in the workplace are types of quadrant D knowledge.

Each of these four quadrants can also be labeled with a term that characterizes the learning or student performance.

Quadrant A — Acquisition

Students gather and store bits of knowledge and information. Students are primarily expected to remember or understand this acquired knowledge.

Quadrant B — Application

Students use acquired knowledge to solve problems, design solutions, and complete work. The highest level of application is to apply appropriate knowledge to new and unpredictable situations.

Quadrant C — Assimilation

Students extend and refine their acquired knowledge to be able to use that knowledge automatically and routinely to analyze and solve problems and create unique solutions.

Quadrant D — Adaptation

Students have the competence to think in complex ways and also apply knowledge and skills they have acquired. Even when confronted with perplexing unknowns, students are able to use extensive knowledge and skill to create solutions and take action that further develops their skills and knowledge.

Here is an example involving technical reading and writing.

Quadrant A

Recall definitions of various technical terms.

Quadrant B

Follow written directions to install new software on a computer.

Quadrant C

Compare and contrast several technical documents to evaluate purpose, audience, and clarity.

Quadrant D

Write procedures for installing and troubleshooting new software.

A Fresh Approach

The Rigor/Relevance Framework is a fresh approach to looking at curriculum standards and assessment. It is based on traditional elements of education yet encourages movement to application of knowledge instead of maintaining an exclusive focus on acquisition of knowledge.

The Framework is easy to understand. With its simple, straightforward structure, it can serve as a bridge between school and the community. It offers a common language with which to express the notion of a more rigorous and relevant curriculum and encompasses much of what parents, business leaders, and community members want students to learn. The Framework is versatile; it can be used in the development of instruction and assessment. Likewise, teachers can use it to measure their progress in adding rigor and relevance to instruction and to select appropriate instructional strategies to meet learner needs and higher achievement goals.

Defining Rigor

A versatile way to define the level of rigor of curriculum objectives, instructional activities, or assessments is by using the Knowledge Taxonomy Verb List (see next page). The Verb List can be used either to create a desired level of expected student performance or to evaluate the level of existing curriculum, instruction or assessment.

An example of student performance at various levels follows. Notice each statement starts with a verb that comes from the appropriate section of the Knowledge Taxonomy Verb List. The expected achievement level for teaching about nutrition can vary depending on the purpose of the instruction. If a teacher only wants students to acquire basic nutritional knowledge, a student performance set at level one of two is adequate. If the instruction is intended to have a more significant impact on nutritional habits, then some of the objectives need to be similar to levels four through six.

Note that each of the levels requires students to think differently. Levels four through six require more complex thinking than levels one through three.

When creating lesson plans and student objectives, selecting the proper word from the Knowledge Taxonomy Verb List can help to describe the appropriate performance. Simply start with a verb from the desired level and finish the statement with a specific description of that skill or knowledge area.

The Verb List can also be used to evaluate existing lesson plans, assessments, and instructional experiences. Looking for verbs and identifying their level will give a good indication of the level of student performance in that instruction.

BASIC NUTRITION	
Level	Performance
Level 1 – Knowledge	Label foods by nutritional groups
Level 2 – Comprehension	Explain nutritional value of individual foods
Level 3 – Application	Make use of nutrition guidelines in planning meals
Level 4 – Analysis	Examine success in achieving nutrition goals
Level 5 – Synthesis	Develop personal nutrition goals
Level 6 – Evaluation	Appraise results of personal eating habits over time

Defining Relevance

Defining the level of relevance of curriculum objectives and instructional activities is a little more difficult than determining the Knowledge Taxonomy level because there is no verb list. However, just as the Knowledge Taxonomy categorizes increasing levels of thinking, the Application Model described increasingly complex applications of knowledge. Any student performance can be expressed as one of five levels of the Application Model. The Application Model Decision Tree can assist in setting the desired level of expected student performance in application.

The Basic Nutrition example that follows is similar to the one in the Defining Rigor section in that it uses nutrition to describe student

Knowledge Taxonomy Verb List

1

Knowledge

arrange	match
check	name
choose	point to
find	recall
group	recite
identify	repeat
label	say
list	select
locate	write

2

Comprehension

advance	interpret
calculate	outline
change	project
contemplate	propose
convert	reword
define	submit
explain	transform
extrapolate	translate
infer	vary

3

Application

adopt	manipulate
capitalize on	mobilize
consume	operate
devote	put to use
employ	relate
exercise	solve
handle	start
maintain	take up
make use of	utilize

4

Analysis

assay	include
audit	inspect
break down	look at
canvass	scrutinize
check out	sift
deduce	study
dissect	survey
divide	test for
examine	uncover

5

Synthesis

blend	develop
build	evolve
cause	form
combine	generate
compile	make up
compose	originate
conceive	produce
construct	reorder
create	structure

6

Evaluation

accept	grade
appraise	judge
arbitrate	prioritize
assess	rank
award	rate
classify	reject
criticize	rule on
decide	settle
determine	weigh

performance at various levels. Each level requires students to apply knowledge differently.

Similarly, the expected achievement level for teaching about nutrition can vary depending on the purpose of the instruction. If a teacher wants students only to acquire basic nutritional knowledge, a student performance set at level one is adequate. If the instruction is intended to have a significant impact on nutritional habits, then some of the objectives need to be at levels four and five.

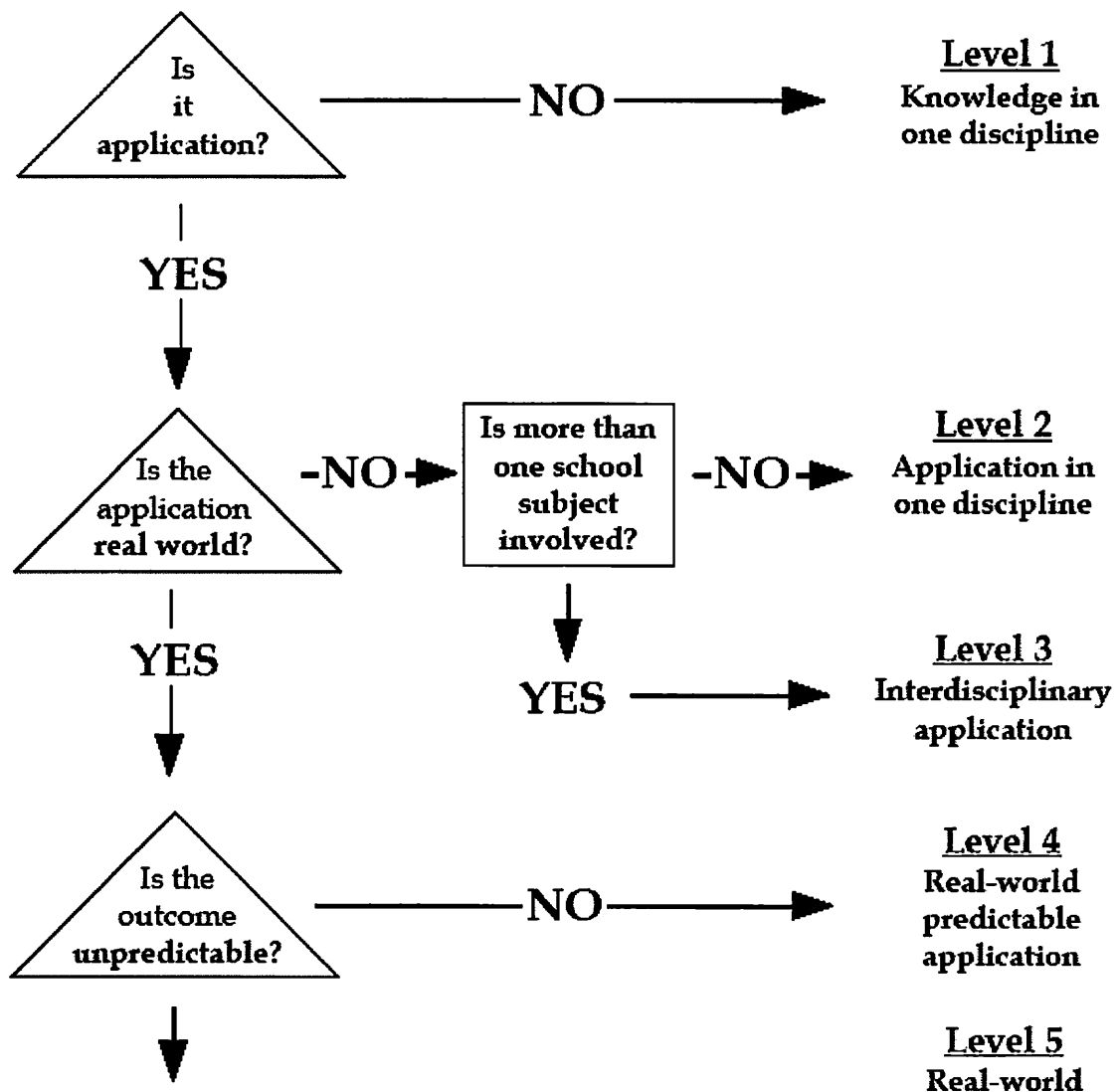
Basic Nutrition	
Level	Performance
Level 1 – Knowledge in One Discipline	Label foods by nutritional groups
Level 2 – Application in One Discipline	Rank foods by nutritional value
Level 3 – Interdisciplinary Application	Make cost comparisons of different foods considering nutritional value
Level 4 – Real-world Predictable Situations	Develop a nutritional plan for a person with a health problem affected by food intake
Level 5 – Real-world Unpredictable Situations	Devise a sound nutritional plan for a group of 3-year-olds who are picky eaters

Use of the Application Model Decision Tree can help to describe desired performance. Start by writing draft statements of student objectives and then use the Decision Tree to reflect on and revise these statements. The Decision Tree focuses on the three key characteristics that distinguish levels of the Application Model: application, real world, and unpredictability. The second page of the Decision Tree offers additional criteria to determine whether an objective meets the test of application, real world, and unpredictability.

The Application Model Decision Tree can also be used to evaluate existing lesson plans, assessments, and instructional experiences. Answer the questions to identify the level of student performance for that instruction or assessment.

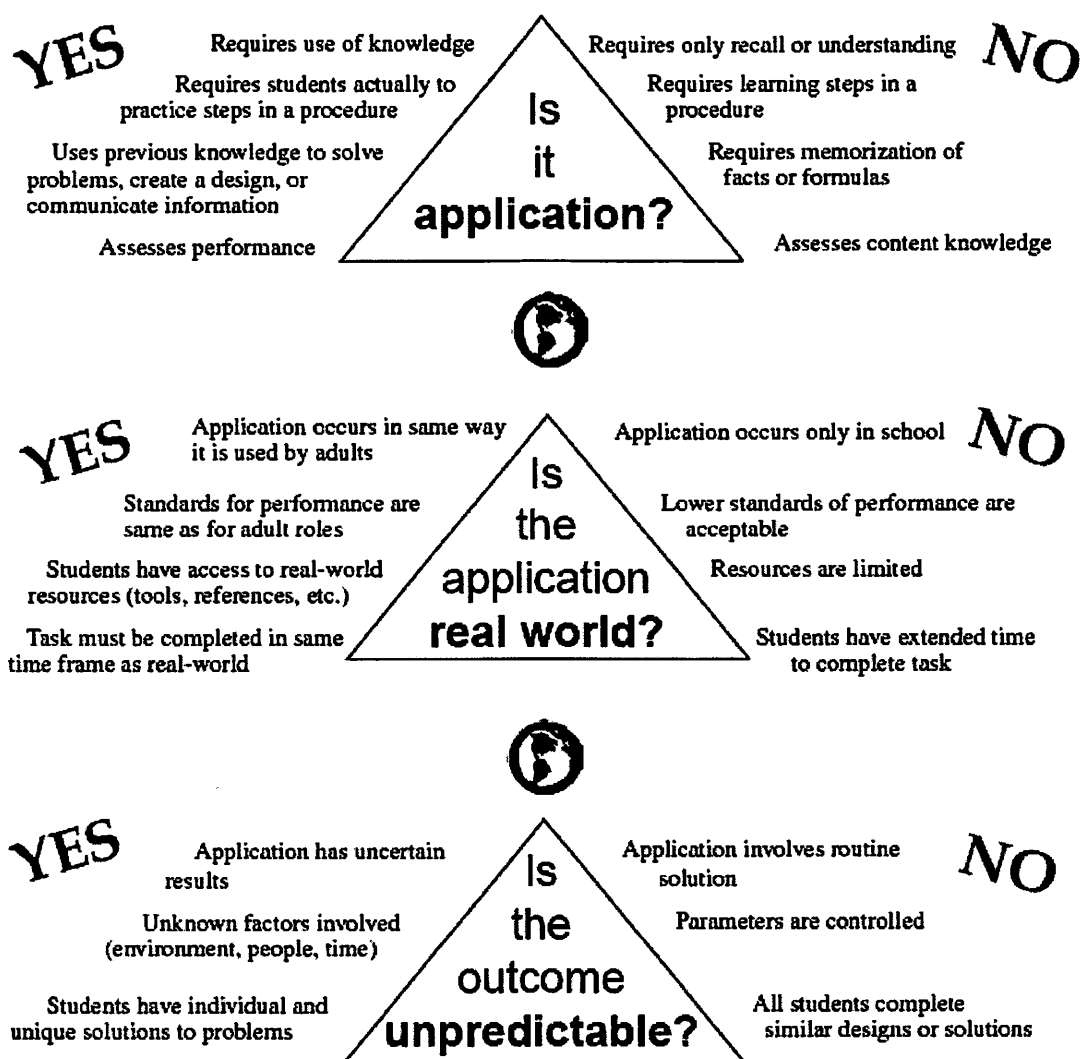
Application Model Decision Tree

Directions: Select a task, application, or activity and then answer the following questions. See next page for clarification of the questions.



Application Model Decision Tree

Directions: Use the following statements to clarify where a task, application, or assessment belongs on the Application Model.



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