

ESSENTIAL PRACTICES FOR DISTRICT LEADERSHIP TEAMS

Richard Elmore, Gregory R. Anrig Professor of Educational Leadership at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, describes the purpose of leadership as one of improving instructional practice and performance, regardless of role. He asserts that the deromanticizing of leadership in American education – anchoring leadership in the focused work of instructional practice rather than in the character traits and actions of individual leaders – would have a very positive effect on the quality of schools.



Distributing key leadership functions – all centered on improving practices in curriculum, instruction, and assessment – through the development and use of leadership teams shifts the focus of leadership from a single individual to a team of individuals that can function as purposeful communities, “enhancing the skills and knowledge of the people in the organization, creating a common culture of expectations around the use of those skills and knowledge, holding the various pieces of the organization together in a productive relationship with each other, and holding individuals accountable for their contributions to the collective result.” (Elmore, 2006, p. 59)



Promoting a culture of shared understanding and expectations for what constitutes high-quality instructional practice, holding all schools accountable for following through on the full implementation of agreed-on strategies and actions to meet district-identified goals, and providing the support that schools need to make progress are key functions of Ohio district leadership teams (DLTs). DLTs are instrumental in facilitating the transition of central office personnel from serving traditional managerial roles to serving a support function, assisting all school principals and building leadership teams in improving outcomes and results for all children. This changing role means working together across traditional departmental structures and making more informed decisions with regard to hiring and allocating school personnel, allocating funding to schools, and providing a range of support services aligned with the core work of the district.

Leadership functions of the DLT would include such tasks as setting performance targets aligned with Board-adopted district goals; monitoring performance against the targets; building a foundation for data-driven decision making on a system-wide basis; designing system planning and focused improvement strategies, structures, and processes; facilitating the development and use of collaborative structures; brokering or facilitating high-quality professional development consistent with district goals for instruction and achievement; and allocating system resources toward instructional improvement.

