OLAC

2008

Ohio's Leadership Development Framework

A report on the work of the Ohio Leadership Advisory Council to identify essential leadership practices needed by superintendents, district leadership teams and building leadership teams to improve instructional practice and student performance

The Charge to the Ohio Leadership Advisory Council

The Ohio Leadership Advisory Council was charged with addressing four critical questions:

1. What are the essential practices against which current and proposed leadership development initiatives could be assessed by school boards, superintendents, central office personnel, principals and teacher leaders interested in improving leadership for the purpose of improving instructional practice and student performance?
2. What are the critical elements of a comprehensive system of development for superintendents and leadership teams, including core content and a roll-out strategy that relies on multiple effective delivery methods for reaching all districts?
3. What tools, products, and/or services should the state provide, in partnership with districts, institutions of higher education, professional associations and others to assist superintendents and leadership teams in improving instructional practice and student performance?
4. What are the policy implications affecting the development of a cohesive statewide leadership system for Ohio, including key components and leverage points for strengthening leadership in a coherent way?

Tecumseh students Scott Snarr and Natalie Wilson

OLAC Leadership and Membership

OLAC is a 50-member advisory and study group comprised of representatives of key professional associations, business and school board representatives, practitioners in leadership roles, higher education representatives and state department of education personnel. Co-sponsored and co-directed by the Ohio Department of Education and the Buckeye Association of School Administrators, OLAC also includes leadership from the following associations:

- Council for Academic Excellence
- Ohio Association of School Business Officials
- Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators
- Ohio Association of Elementary School Administrators
- Ohio Council of Professors of Educational Administration
- Ohio Education Association
- Ohio Educational Service Center Association
- Ohio Federation of Teachers
- Ohio School Boards Association

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Part I: Foreword

Ohioans have many reasons to be proud of our educational system. Ohio's achievement can be attributed to the many dedicated teachers, administrators, board members, students and families, who have worked to continuously improve our educational system. Since 2000, Ohio has steadily built a standards-based educational system that clarifies content standards in every subject and grade level, and that aligns curriculum and assessments to those standards. With this nationally recognized system in place, Ohio's students are achieving at higher levels than ever before.

Over the past several years, the state has enacted a number of policy advances that build on this strong foundation. In 2005, the State Board of Education adopted three critical sets of standards: *Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession, Ohio Standards for Principals* and *Ohio Standards for Professional Development*. Coupled with the Academic Content Standards for students, these benchmarks provide Ohio's educators with a powerful path to improve their practice and increase student achievement.

Don Washburn and Robert Reece

These advances in the development and refinement of standards constitute a solid framework for a coherent, aligned system to improve educator quality. While we are proud of these advances, we also knew that if we were serious about improving the quality of education for all of Ohio's students, ***a critical challenge remained – to ensure that those who lead our schools, regardless of role, have the essential knowledge and skills to do their jobs – and do them well.*** Simply put, we needed a framework that would improve leadership at all levels of the system from the state, to the district, to the school building, to the classroom.

In 2007, a partnership between the Ohio Department of Education and the Buckeye Association of School Administrators was established to address this challenge. This partnership brought together a distinguished group of leaders from all regions of the state, representing a variety of roles, disciplines and points of view. The leadership development framework presented in this document represents the work of the Ohio Leadership Advisory Council (OLAC) and identifies essential leadership practices needed by superintendents and leadership teams at the district and building level to improve instructional practice and student performance.

From its initial meeting, held March 19, 2007, the Council recognized that its charge had to be addressed from a systems perspective and that the work required a rethinking of what is meant by leadership. Throughout the Council's debate and discussions, members focused on the firm belief that traditional models of leadership residing in a person or persons must be replaced with

new shared leadership among many individuals at various levels throughout the system.

Council members confronted their charge with a unified focus. Over the past year, the Council listened to and learned from district leadership teams, students, board members and others. They heard presentations focused on effective district-wide data use, professional/collaborative learning teams, board relations and teacher leadership. In small groups, they worked to bring consensus around the essential practices needed by Ohio's leaders. As you will see in the visionary framework presented in this report, their hard work paid off.

Ohio's Leadership Development Framework sets forth the foundation to improve the quality of leadership in Ohio's districts and schools. Those who are committed to this work know that the journey ahead will not be easy; that the path involves moving this framework into action through the implementation of these essential leadership practices throughout all levels of Ohio's educational system.

The development of this framework is only the first step in our journey, but it is an important first step as we continue the pursuit of Ohio's vision of *higher achievement for all students*.

"Leadership"

The work of the Ohio Leadership Advisory Council sought to rethink the traditional concept of district and school leadership. As used in this framework, the term "leadership" is based on the belief that (1) all educators have the capacity to lead, and (2) essential leadership practices must be implemented by adults at all levels of the education system for improvement in student performance to be made.

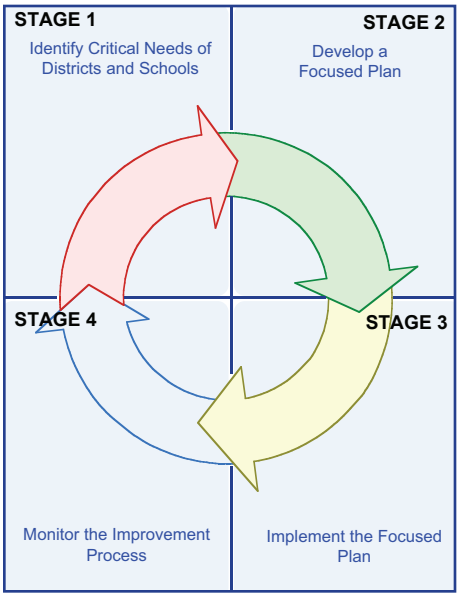
Deborah Tully, Sylvester Small, Kirk Hamilton, and Pat Frost-Brooks

Part II: Creating a Coherent and Cohesive Leadership Development System

The Role of Leadership as a Critical Component of the Ohio Improvement Process

The leadership development framework presented in this report frames the leadership development agenda for Ohio within the larger Ohio Improvement Process. The framework offers a common core of essential practices around which systemic efforts to improve leadership - at the state, regional, and local levels - can be unified and advanced. Ohio's four-stage improvement process provides a structure for aligning processes, tools, and people to significantly improve instructional practice and student performance.

Stages of the Ohio Improvement Process



The framework clarifies leadership roles and responsibilities at the district and school level, validating leadership team structures needed to implement quality planning, implementation, and ongoing monitoring on a system-wide basis. It also supports a coherent leadership development system that can be used to:

- Support the development and growth of superintendents, principals, and teacher leaders;
- Address district systems through the development of highly effective leadership teams focused on implementation of essential practices; and
- Align leadership initiatives at the state level.

Ohio's Leadership Development Framework promotes the use of the most essential leadership practices for superintendents, district leadership teams and building leadership teams that when consistently applied will lead to better results for all children.

The Work of the Ohio Leadership Council

The Ohio Leadership Advisory Council was formed to examine how a leadership "system" for educators could be developed that reaches from top to bottom and across all levels. This system, which includes superintendents, principals and teachers, would affect every level of Ohio's educational enterprise – from the state, to the district, to the school building, to the classroom.

The goals of the Council's Work are to:

- Identify the essential skills or practices that superintendents and leadership teams at the district and school level must demonstrate to improve instructional practice and student performance.

"Leadership is the essential element of any organization's success. In a public school system, leadership means to encourage and motivate at all levels and inspire others to give of their talents and skills. The survival of public education in America is dependent on the quality of the leadership that is provided."

Sylvester Small
Superintendent
Akron Public Schools

- Identify the types of professional development and support needed to assist leaders in acquiring these skills, and how it can be deployed in such a way to allow for universal access, as well as more targeted or intensive support for districts that need it.
- Identify the tools or products needed to facilitate their development.
- Identify the policy implications that must be considered in developing a more coordinated and coherent leadership development system.

OLAC identified three phases for moving the work of the Council forward. Phase I, which ended in January 2008, focused on the identification of essential leadership practices needed to improve instructional practice and student perfomance. Phase II, which began in spring 2008, focuses on the development of tools and products aligned to the essential practices. Phase III will focus on a review of policy implications and the identification of action needed for continued work.

The Ohio Leadership Advisory Council identified the most essential leadership practices across the following six core areas that outline what the superintendent, district leadership team, and school-level/ building leadership team need to do to improve instructional practice and student performance.

A description of these essential leadership practices, which will be used to guide continued development of the leadership framework, as well as online assessment and professional development that will be universally accessible to all districts in the state, follows:

Area 1: Data and the Decision-Making Process

This area focuses on using data to gain clarity around the biggest problems to be addressed, and creating a system that provides feedback and continuous use of data to monitor school practices and their impact on student achievement.

Area 2: Focused Goal-Setting Process

This area recognizes that improvement cannot be random and reinforces the need to create and use one integrated plan with a limited number of focused goals based on data and directly aligned to identified needs.

Area 3: Instruction and the Learning Process

This area emphasizes the importance of clarity on learning outcomes, full access to challenging curriculum for all students, and combining core subject matter competence with a focus on critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and creating collaborative structures to improve the collective use of research-based practices to support high-quality teaching and learning.

"The true essence of leadership is the ability to see opportunities in the midst of the storm. Leaders of integrity inspire others by their example, commitment, and unwavering fortitude in fulfilling a shared vision of achievement for learners of all ages."

Markay Winston
Director of
Student Services
Cincinnati Public Schools

Area 4: Community Engagement Process

This area focuses on the importance of involving stakeholders to assist the superintendent and board in the establishment of district goals around instruction and achievement, and gaining support for sustaining the focus on improving instructional practice and student performance.

Area 5: Resource Management Process

This area focuses on broadening how we think about resources to include not only money, but personnel, programmatic resources, time, and data and ensuring that all resources are used in an intentional way to support district goals for instruction and achievement.

Area 6: Board Relations and Governance Process

[Building Governance Process – at the School Level]

This area focuses on the critical role of the board in developing and supporting district goals for instruction and achievement and ensuring that these goals remain the primary focus of district work.

Steven Raines and Paul Pendleton

Part III: Ohio's Leadership Development Framework

"Successful organizations do not exist without highly effective leadership. To have all parts of an organization individually and collaboratively achieving at the highest level, the leadership must create the vision, the urgency, and the direction for the system. Highly effective school systems have leaders that exhibit passion, focus, persistence, support, pressure, and ongoing commitment to their community, their organization, their employees, and their students."

Jerry Klenke
Executive Director
Buckeye Association of School Administrators

Leadership matters, but what is leadership? A fundamental assumption underlying Ohio's work to create a coherent and cohesive leadership development system is that the purpose of leadership is the improvement of instructional practice and performance, regardless of role (Elmore, 2006). This foundational principle, supported by recent meta-analytical studies on the impact of district and school leadership on student achievement, lends support for the creation of new leadership models that can be used to distribute key leadership functions, and align and focus work across the system to improve instructional practice and student performance.

The Leadership Development Framework presented in this document represents the work of the Ohio Leadership Advisory Council (OLAC), and identifies essential leadership practices needed by superintendents and leadership teams at the district and building level to improve instructional practice and student performance. A partnership effort sponsored by the Ohio Department of Education and the Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA), OLAC was established to identify

- Essential practices against which current and proposed leadership development initiatives could be assessed by school boards, superintendents, central office personnel, principals, and teacher leaders interested in improving leadership for the purpose of improving instructional practice and student performance;
- Critical elements of a comprehensive system of development for superintendents and leadership teams, including core content and a roll-out strategy that relies on multiple effective delivery methods for reaching all districts;
- Tools, products, and services the state should provide in partnership with districts, institutions of higher education, professional associations, and others to assist superintendents and leadership teams in improving instructional practice and student performance; and
- Policy implications affecting the development of a cohesive statewide leadership system for Ohio, including key components/leverage points for strengthening leadership in Ohio in a coherent way.

"As an organization that serves school district leaders, OSBA is keenly aware that robust, innovative leadership is essential to public education's success. Only by cultivating a highly capable cadre of leaders will our schools, state and nation thrive in the 21st century global economy. By inspiring, guiding and teaching, today's education leaders can create the leadership of tomorrow."

Rick Lewis
Executive Director
Ohio School Boards Association

Underlying the work of the Council is the belief that

- Leadership in our schools and districts is extremely important in improving student achievement, and effective school leaders are essential to implementing and sustaining meaningful school improvement efforts;
- There is an urgent need for effective leadership and a statewide response for effectively addressing that need must be developed now;
- Ohio's leadership system must be anchored in teaching and learning, focused on building community, and directed to ensuring the success of all children;
- A body of research-based evidence exists to support the kind of leadership behaviors needed to improve student achievement; and
- Effective leadership must be exercised at all levels of the school enterprise for meaningful and sustainable district-wide improvements in student achievement to be realized.

Exercising effective leadership at all levels of the district/school enterprise means acknowledging the critical role that local boards of education play in making student achievement the top priority and in ensuring that district goals for achievement and instruction remain the primary focus of the district's work.

It requires superintendents to focus their efforts on creating goal-oriented districts by engaging in collaborative goal setting, and working with the board to set and monitor progress and align resources toward meeting non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction. And, it requires effective leadership team structures at the district and school level to implement strategies and actions in an aligned and focused way to reach district goals.

It also requires the intentional shift *away from* the traditional notion of leader as manager and leadership as an administrative position/role *to* leadership as a set of practices that must be exercised across the system to address the increasing challenges and expectations – both internal and external – faced by public education today.

"Leadership is critical if we are to be successful in our efforts to continually improve the educational opportunities for the boys and girls of Ohio. Committed, knowledgeable, focused leaders are a critical element of successful public schools."

Kirk Hamilton
Deputy Executive Director
Buckeye Association of School Administrators

These challenges, described in recent national and state reports, call for changing the system in a big way. For example, in Tough Choices or Tough Times (National Center on Education and the Economy, 2007), the New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce describes a fundamental redesign of the "whole education system" as the only alternative for radically increasing student performance. All students must be proficient at significantly higher levels of knowledge and skill to ensure that they are prepared to live and work in an increasingly competitive and global economy. Universal access to quality education for all students, coupled with strong support for students who need it most, are cornerstones of the Commission report and are reflected in Ohio's commitment to ensure that leadership development is anchored in teaching and learning, focused on building community, and directed to ensure the success of all children.

Central to these calls for change is the recognition that district culture must require and support the use of evidence-based professional practices that lead to improved achievement, rejecting the notion that student achievement is pre-determined based on a student's race, disability, or degree of wealth. Moving past opinion, preference, and popular practice to effective practice based on data and evidence requires clarity on learning outcomes, agreement on the "right" work, and a reframing of leadership as a set of practices that are implemented continuously and collectively across the system and for which the adults in the system are held accountable.

Seena Skelton

"Leadership is demonstrating the wisdom, courage and sensitivity to move people forward, especially in the midst of adversity."

Jean Harper
Superintendent
Springfield City Schools

Stephen Barr and David Varda

Essential Practices for Superintendents

The role of the superintendent in today's increasingly complex, competitive, and global economy must be to set the stage for student learning on a system-wide basis, not only to close achievement gaps between groups of students, but also to raise performance expectations for all students through a focus on twenty-first century skills.

Setting the stage includes setting the direction and expectations for facilitating and monitoring student learning, engaging in regular conversations about student learning, focusing the core work of the district on the improvement of instructional practice and student performance, engaging staff and the community in improving the teaching and learning process, implementing Board policies, and creating the processes, structures, and culture to support continuous improvement in student learning across multiple dimensions.

Professor Mark H. Moore of the JFK School of Government at Harvard uses a strategic triangle to talk about the need for leaders to integrate three components when managing change associated with the implementation of complex improvement strategies: making strategic decisions based on the public value the organization is trying to create (i.e., moral purpose); managing the political environment so the organization obtains the resources and authority it needs to make improvement; and managing the operational capacity so that the organization can fulfill its organizational purpose and mission.

In effective districts and schools, this kind of improvement is not random. Rather, it is highly focused, beginning with an honest assessment of student data and the identification of academic weaknesses that must be addressed. It involves the development of leadership teams, targeted professional development, the alignment or realignment of resources to address identified weaknesses, and an internal accountability system for continuously monitoring whether instructional practices are having the desired effect on student performance.

These practices are reflected in findings released in September 2006 by the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) following a comprehensive analysis of 27 studies conducted since 1970 on the effect of district leadership on student achievement. This meta-analysis, which constitutes the largest ever quantitative examination of research on superintendents, found a statistically significant relationship between district-level leadership and student achievement, demonstrating that effective superintendents create goal-oriented districts focused on teaching and learning goals. These goals are centered on achievement and instruction, are collaboratively developed, are Board-adopted, and are stable and sustainable for an extended period of time. For purposes of the OLAC Leadership Development Framework, such goals are referred to as ***district*** goals.

Jo Maurer, Pat Frost-Brooks, and Debbie Finkes

Researchers identified the following five district-level responsibilities that were significantly positively correlated with improved student achievement.

1. Collaborative goal setting

Effective superintendents work with their Board to involve all relevant stakeholders in establishing goals for the district.

2. Non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction

Effective superintendents ensure that the collaborative goal setting process results in non-negotiable goals, defined as goals that all staff members must act upon, in at least two areas (i.e., student achievement and classroom instruction), set specific achievement targets for schools and students, and ensure the consistent use of research-based instructional strategies in all classrooms to reach those targets.

3. Board alignment and support of district goals

The local board of education is aligned with and supportive of the non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction in districts with higher levels of achievement. They ensure that these goals remain the driving force behind a district's actions.

4. Monitoring goals for achievement and instruction

Effective superintendents continually monitor district progress toward achievement and instructional goals to ensure that these goals remain the driving force behind a district's actions.

5. Use of resources to support achievement and instruction

Effective superintendents ensure that the necessary resources – including time, money, personnel, and materials – are allocated to accomplish the district's goals. Initiatives that are not aligned with district goals for achievement and instruction are reduced or eliminated.

***Adapted** from School District Leadership that Works: The Effect of Superintendent Leadership on Student Achievement. A Working Paper. J. Timothy Waters, Ed.D. & Robert J. Marzano, Ph.D., McREL, September 2006.*

Related Resources

– Ohio Standards for Superintendents (in development, 2008)

"Leadership is first about building positive relationships that foster, encourage and support necessary and appropriate educational changes. The leader must operate from a set of shared values in order to develop a culture of focusing on student achievement. The challenge of the survival of our public schools rest in the hands of visionary educational leaders."

Paul Pendleton
Executive Director
Council for Academic Excellence

Area 1: Data and the Decision-Making Process – Superintendent

- *Importance of identifying, collecting, analyzing and effectively using relevant data to identify greatest problems to be addressed, and to create the kind of culture and expectation that supports effective data-based decision-making at all levels of the system.*
- *Importance of developing shared accountability by broadening the concept of accountability to include "internal" measures that hold all adults accountable for improved student performance, rather than only external accountability imposed from outside.*
- *Importance of using data to continuously monitor student progress against performance targets and district established goals.*
- *Importance of addressing achievement and growth, and in getting past opinion through the use of research-based practices.*

Essential Practices

1. Establish clear expectations for and require the effective use of data at all levels of the system to drive improvement in instructional practice, to assess its impact on student achievement, and to make decisions about teaching and learning.
2. Build a culture that supports the effective use of data to improve student performance by organizing and presenting data in ways that identify gaps and trends in student performance and requiring intentional decisions regarding curriculum and instruction, interventions, and professional development.
3. Require the use of current disaggregated student achievement data to establish focused goals and measurable strategies for instruction and achievement.
4. Use data to set performance targets for each building and grade level, planning for the success of all children and designed to close achievement and expectation gaps for every subgroup of the population.
5. Ensure the skillful and accurate use of data by providing ongoing training and support throughout the organization.
6. Expect district administrators and principals to model and monitor use of data to inform instructional decisions.
7. Establish as a part of the central office, services to regularly review and analyze building-level data and to provide guidance for both district and building-level actions.

Area 2: Focused Goal Setting Process – Superintendent

- *Importance of identifying – based on a review of data – a limited number of goals, and a limited number of strategies for each goal, that allow for concentrated focus on the core work that needs to be done to improve student performance.*
- *The importance of aligning district work with district goals for instruction and achievement (i.e., defined as non-negotiable goals that are collaboratively developed, board adopted, and stable/ sustainable over an extended period of time).*
- *Importance of reducing the number of initiatives to align improvement efforts on a district-wide basis around two or three focused goals directly related to identified needs.*
- *Importance of developing one plan, rather than multiple and often contradictory plans, aligned with the district goals.*
- *Importance of internal accountability, which holds all adults in the system accountable for implementing evidence-based practices to improve teaching and learning.*

Kathleen Lowery and Marilyn Troyer

Essential Practices

1. Commit, in conjunction with the board of education, the district and all schools to make continuous progress toward meeting district goals and performance targets for instruction and achievement.
2. Ensure the collaborative development and ongoing monitoring of a single district improvement plan that focuses on a limited number of district goals.
3. Implement the district improvement plan with a limited number of focused district goals that are based on current aggregated and disaggregated student achievement data.
4. Establish and convey the district's vision and mission for guiding the collaborative development and communication of district goals.
5. Ensure that schools have focused building improvement plans that are clearly aligned to and designed to meet district goals.
6. Develop and implement an internal accountability system that holds the adults at all levels accountable for results.
7. Implement a sustainable system for monitoring progress and making adjustments to implementation of the district improvement plan.

"For Thomas Jefferson, "A system of general instruction" was the cornerstone for our democracy. Strategic leadership in education is therefore critical for this important moral purpose."

Mark Weinberg
Professor and Director Voinovich Center for Leasdership and Public Affairs, Ohio University

Area 3: Instruction and the Learning Process – Superintendent

- *Importance of a focus on 21st century skills, ensuring that all children combine core subject mastery with other significant skills, including critical thinking and problem solving, creativity and innovation, communication, and collaboration skills; information and communication technology literacy; life skills (leadership, ethics, personal productivity, self-directed learning); and twenty-first century content (global awareness and business fundamentals and economic literacy).*
- *Importance of developing collaborative structures (e.g., district, department, building, grade-level teams) to facilitate communication, build trust and credibility, and stay focused on the collective and shared responsibility for improving student achievement.*
- *Importance of providing full access to challenging content aligned with rigorous standards for all students and student groups as part of closing the achievement and expectation gap.*

Essential Practices

1. Require the district-wide use of an established curriculum aligned with district goals.
2. Ensure the development and implementation of high-quality standards-based instruction aligned with district goals.
3. Establish clear priorities among the district's instructional goals and strategies.
4. Require use of a process that accurately monitors implementation of the district's instructional program.
5. Ensure that the district curriculum and instructional program are designed to provide full access and opportunity to all students/ student groups to meet district goals.
6. Require the systemic implementation and ongoing evaluation of prevention/intervention strategies as part of its instructional program to ensure that all students meet performance targets.
7. Require the frequent use of collaboratively developed common formative classroom assessments to gauge student progress and guide instructional planning toward meeting district goals.
8. Define and expect principals to fulfill instructional leader responsibilities.
9. Require administrators and building leadership teams (BLTs) to take action to ensure the progress of each student toward meeting district goals.

"Strong, effective leadership is about creating relationships with others first and foremost. Once you do, people will follow your lead and you will be able to achieve a significant impact on what goes on in the schools and the district that influences student performance in a positive and lasting way."

Kathleen Lowery
Director of Member Development
Buckeye Association of School Administrators

Area 4: Community Engagement Process – Superintendent

- *Importance of meaningfully involving all relevant stakeholders to assist the superintendent and board in establishing district goals.*
- *Importance of gaining support for needed improvements and to sustain a focus on district goals.*
- *Importance of managing change needed to improve student achievement.*
- *Importance of assessing the effectiveness of the community engagement process.*
- *Importance of engaging both internal and external community members, defined as those individuals who affect or are affected by the success of the district [typical stakeholder groups include students, teachers, paraprofessionals, support staff, school administrators, students' immediate family members, school board members, community leaders, local business and industry representatives, and citizens who live in the community(ies)].*

Essential Practices

1. Collaborate effectively with internal and external community members in the development and support of district goals.
2. Communicate clear expectations with regard to district goals.
3. Offer opportunities for meaningful input and feedback from internal and external community members with regard to district goals.
4. Ensure that partnership activities are focused on district goals.
5. Provide for training/support as needed by internal and external community members to enable them to meaningfully participate in activities aligned with district goals.

Wade Lucas and Deb Delisle

"The most significant gift a leader can give is growing leadership in others."

C. Daniel Raisch
Associate Dean for Administration
University of Dayton

Area 5: Resource Management Process – Superintendent

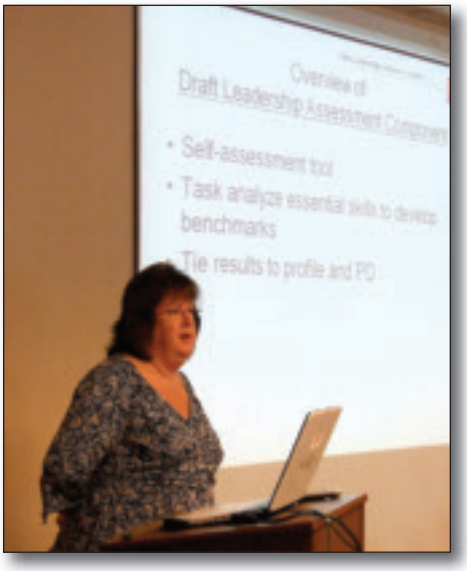
- *Importance of broadening the definition of resource management to include the management of time, money, staff, and programmatic resources, emphasizing the importance of directing effort toward student achievement.*
- *Importance of including the district business manager/director of business operations/treasurer as an integral member of the district leadership team.*
- *Importance of maintaining shared central office and school authority over major resource decisions, focusing district and building meetings on learning and instruction, using performance data to guide program decisions, investing in targeted professional development aligned with identified needs, and investing in academic support programs to narrow or close achievement gaps.*
- *Importance of making "proactive, highly intentional decisions" about the equitable (as compared to equal) allocation of resources to achieve the district's non-negotiable goals.*
- *Importance of advocating for the generation of additional funding aligned with meeting district goals.*

Essential Practices

1. Focus the use of district resources, including time as well as staff, programmatic, and monetary resources to support district goals.
2. Use data to inform the budget process and ensure that appropriate resources are allocated to support the district's continuous improvement plan (CIP).
3. Support the effective use of data to improve focused planning and instruction on a district-wide basis.
4. Support and equitably allocate resources to principals and their schools to meet the district's CIP and school improvement plan (SIP).
5. Establish procedures to screen, interview and select staff based on district goals.
6. Develop and implement a system for staff performance reviews aligned with district goals.
7. Provide for extensive job-embedded professional development for all staff aligned with district goals.
8. Eliminate initiatives that are not aligned with district goals, or are ineffective in meeting district goals.

Area 6: Board Development and Governance Process – Superintendent

- *Importance of the board's involvement in the development and approval of district goals, as well as the board's support for the district's goals for achievement and instruction, ensuring that these goals remain the primary focus of district efforts.*
- *Importance of the relationship of superintendent continuity to increases in student performance.*
- *Importance of engaging multiple constituencies to gain support for needed improvements and to sustain a focus on district goals.*
- *Importance of the moral imperative of maintaining a student-centered focus and ensuring that improvement efforts are designed to ensure the success of every child.*
- *Importance of shared understanding of the roles of the superintendent and board members.*



Sheila Smith

Essential Practices

1. Keep the purpose of ensuring the success of every student central to all decisions.
2. Work in partnership with board members to adopt and review all policies in meeting the district goals.
3. Report student achievement data and progress on district goals to the board on a regular and frequent basis.
4. Maintain high expectations for district and school performance.
5. Continually promote high expectations so that all internal and external stakeholders can articulate district goals.
6. Provide opportunities for and encourage board member participation in professional development aligned with district priorities.

Tecumseh teachers Bridget Parker and Angela Greene with students Scott Snarr and Natalie Wilson

"Part of our responsibilities as educational leaders includes "passing on our knowledge and expertise" to tomorrow's leaders. Like the children that we teach, adults model what they see and hear. It is critical that we [today's leaders] provide that model."

Wade Lucas
Superintendent
Green Local Schools

Essential Practices for District Leadership Teams

Richard Elmore, Gregory Anrig Professor of Educational Leadership at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and a senior research fellow at the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE), 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 common expectations or commitment to district and school improvement by maintaining a district-wide focus on high achievement for all students is the primary function of the district leadership team (DLT). Consistent with recommendations provided by Achieve, Inc. in its 2006 report Creating a World-Class Education System in Ohio, the DLT could facilitate the called-for transition to a new role for central office – one that is much more student-focused and geared toward increasing principal and teacher effectiveness in improving outcomes and results for all children. This changing role means making more informed decisions with regard to hiring and allocating school personnel, allocating funding to schools, and providing a range of support services, as well as providing strategic management and support to schools and aligning school principals around a strategy for delivering against state standards.

"All the leadership standards depend on one thing - the will to focus. Leaders must insist that we target all resources, focus every discussion/decision and continuously communicate the focus until every classroom demonstrates the vision. A mentor always said to me, "Leadership is saying no to good ideas" and this has never been more true. If we don't learn to do this in education, we will continue to have a history of disconnected good ideas that frequently change and never see large scale change in every classroom."

April Domine
Superintendent
Big Walnut Local Schools

Area 2: Focused Goal Setting Process – District Leadership Team

- *Importance of identifying – based on a review of data – a limited number of goals, and a limited number of strategies for each goal, that allow for concentrated focus on the core work that needs to be done to improve student performance.*
- *The importance of aligning district work with district goals for instruction and achievement (i.e., defined as non-negotiable goals that are collaboratively developed, board adopted, and stable/ sustainable over an extended period of time).*
- *Importance of reducing the number of initiatives to align improvement efforts on a district-wide basis around two or three focused goals and a limited number of strategies directly related to identified needs.*
- *Importance of developing one plan, rather than multiple and often contradictory plans, aligned with district goals.*

Essential Practices

1. Support the development and ongoing monitoring of a single district improvement plan (CIP) that focuses on a limited number of district goals.
2. Facilitate the implementation of the district improvement plan with a limited number of district goals that are based on current aggregated and disaggregated student achievement data.
3. Commit to continuous improvement toward meeting district goals.
4. Convey to all schools the district's vision and mission for guiding the collaborative development of district goals, and communicate performance targets to all buildings.
5. Ensure that schools have a focused school improvement plan (SIP) clearly aligned to and designed to meet the district's CIP.
6. Implement an internal accountability system that holds the adults at all levels accountable for results.
7. Monitor the progress of the district improvement plan and, based on current data, make necessary adjustments.

"Effective leadership develops an environment where everyone in the organization shares the responsibility for learning opportunities; for themselves and each student."

Rhoda Mast
Principal
Mt. Eaton Elementary School

Area 3: Instruction and the Learning Process – District Leadership Team

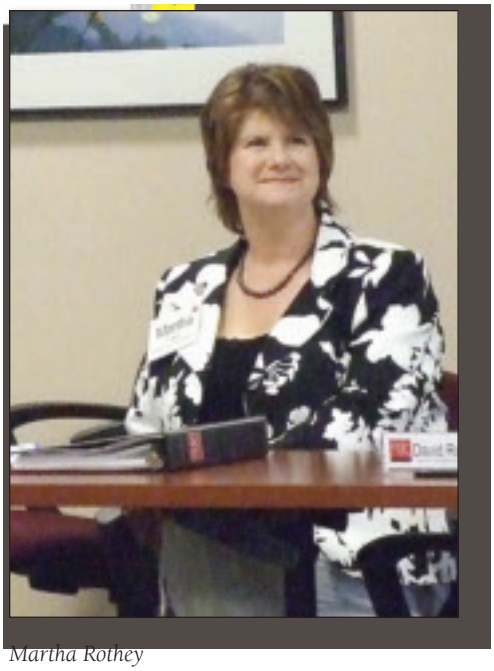
- *Importance of a focus on 21st century skills, ensuring that all children combine core subject mastery with other significant skills, including critical thinking and problem solving, creativity and innovation, communication, and collaboration skills; information and communication technology literacy; life skills (leadership, ethics, personal productivity, self-directed learning); and twenty-first century content (global awareness and business fundamentals and economic literacy).*
- *Importance of developing collaborative structures (e.g., district, department, building, grade-level teams) to facilitate communication, build trust and credibility, and stay focused on the collective and shared responsibility for improving student achievement.*
- *Importance of providing full access to challenging content aligned with rigorous standards for all students and student groups as part of closing the achievement and expectation gap.*

Essential Practices

1. Support the implementation of high-quality standards-based instruction aligned with the district's curriculum and goals for instruction and achievement on a district-wide basis.
2. Assure that the district curriculum is the curriculum used in all schools.
3. Convey clear priorities among the district's instructional goals and strategies.
4. Ensure the delivery of high-quality instruction on a district-wide basis that is based on research-based practices, engages students, incorporates culturally responsive practices, and relies on ongoing assessment and progress monitoring to inform instruction.
5. Implement the process that accurately monitors the district's instructional program.
6. Monitor student achievement, ensuring that school instructional practices are designed to provide full access and opportunity to all students/student groups to meet district goals.
7. Ensure the systemic implementation and ongoing evaluation of prevention/intervention strategies as part of its instructional program to ensure that all students meet performance targets.
8. Require the frequent use of collaboratively developed common formative classroom assessments to gauge student progress and guide instructional planning toward meeting district goals.
9. Assist administrators in fulfilling instructional leader responsibilities.
10. Assist administrators and building leadership teams (BLTs) to effectively monitor the progress of all students in their building toward meeting district goals.

Area 4: Community Engagement Process – District Leadership Team

- *Importance of meaningfully involving all relevant stakeholders to assist the superintendent and board members in establishing district goals.*
- *Importance of engaging multiple constituencies to gain support for needed improvements and to sustain a focus on district goals.*
- *Importance of managing change needed to improve student achievement.*
- *Importance of engaging both internal and external community members, defined as those individuals who affect or are affected by the success of the district [typical stakeholder groups include students, teachers, paraprofessionals, support staff, school administrators, students' immediate family members, school board members, community leaders, local business and industry representatives, and citizens who live in the community(ies)].*

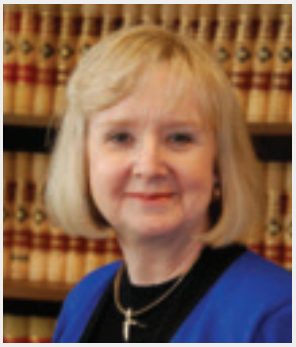


Martha Rothey

Essential Practices

1. Collaborate effectively with internal and external community members in the development and support of district goals.
2. Communicate clear expectations with regard to district goals.
3. Offer opportunities for meaningful input and feedback from internal and external community members with regard to district goals.
4. Develop partnerships focused on district goals.
5. Provide training/support needed by internal and external community members to enable them to meaningfully participate in activities aligned with district goals.

John Boggess, Ben McGee, and Debbie Finkes



"School leaders make decisions everyday with tremendous moral implications for the students in their care. Our obligation as leaders is to ensure equitable and just treatment for all."

Nelda Cambron-McCabe
Professor, Education Administration
Miami University

Area 5: Resource Management Process – District Leadership Team

- *Importance of broadening the definition of resource management to include the management of time, money, staff, and programmatic resources, emphasizing the importance of directing effort toward student achievement.*
- *Importance of including the district business manager/director of business operations/treasurer as an integral member of the district leadership team.*
- *Importance of maintaining shared central office and school authority over major resource decisions.*
- *Importance of focusing district and building meetings on learning and instruction.*
- *Importance of using performance data to guide program decisions, investing in targeted professional development aligned with identified needs, and investing in academic support programs to narrow or close achievement gaps.*
- *Importance of forecasting resources needed to meet district goals.*
- *Importance of making "proactive, highly intentional decisions" about the equitable (as compared to equal) allocation of resources to achieve district goals.*

Essential Practices

1. Assess and make recommendations to the superintendent regarding financial and capital management aligned to district goals for instruction and achievement.
2. Use data to inform the budget process and allocate district resources to support district goals.
3. Allocate equitable and appropriate time, training, and resources to support the effective use of data to improve focused planning and instruction on a district-wide basis.
4. Assess and make recommendations to the superintendent regarding human resource development (including developing others as leaders) aligned to district goals.
5. Assess and make recommendations to the superintendent regarding scheduling aligned to district goals.
6. Support and allocate resources to schools to meet district goals.
7. Screen, interview and select staff based on district goals.
8. Establish and implement supervisory systems that ensure progress toward meeting district goals.
9. Provide for extensive job-embedded professional development aligned with district goals.
10. Identify initiatives not aligned with or ineffective in meeting district goals that should be eliminated.

"From the boardroom to the classroom, leadership changes lives."

Paul Johnson
Professor, Educational Administration & Leadership Studies Bowling Green State University, and Member, Bucyrus Board of Education

Area 6: Board Development and Governance Process – District Leadership Team

- *Importance of the board's involvement in the development and approval of district goals, as well as the board's support for district goals for achievement and instruction, ensuring that these goals remain the primary focus of district efforts.*
- *Importance of the relationship of superintendent tenure to increases in student performance.*
- *Importance of engaging multiple constituencies to gain support for needed improvements and to sustain a focus on district goals around instruction and achievement.*
- *Importance of the moral imperative of maintaining a student-centered focus and ensuring that improvement efforts are designed to ensure the success of every child.*

Essential Practices

1. Keep the purpose of ensuring the success of every student central to all decisions.
2. Support the superintendent's work in partnership with board members to adopt and continually review progress toward meeting district goals.
3. Provide data and reports to the superintendent to inform the board as part of policy governance.
4. Maintain high expectations for district and school performance.
5. Continually promote high expectations so that all internal and external community members can articulate district goals.
6. Support the provision of professional development aligned with district priorities for board members.

Keith Bell and Jennifer Stewart

Reference Guide
Leadership Development Framework

AREA 1: Data and the Decision-Making Process

Superintendent	District Leadership Team	Building Leadership Team

Area 1 emphasizes the importance of:

- Identifying, collecting, analyzing and effectively using relevant data to identify greatest problems to be addressed, and to create the kind of culture and expectation that supports effective data-based decision-making at all levels of the system.
- Developing shared accountability by broadening the concept of accountability to include "internal" measures that hold all adults accountable for improved student performance, rather than only external accountability imposed from outside.
- Using data to continuously monitor student progress against performance targets and district established goals.
- Addressing achievement and growth, and in getting past opinion through the use of research-based practices.

Essential Practices

Use this reference guide to consider your level of implementation of each of the essential leadership practices.

Superintendent

1. Establish clear expectations for and require the effective use of data at all levels of the system to drive improvement in instructional practice, to assess its impact on student achievement, and to make decisions about teaching and learning.
2. Build a culture that supports the effective use of data to improve student performance by organizing and presenting data in ways that identify gaps and trends in student performance and requiring intentional decisions regarding curriculum and instruction, interventions, and professional development.
3. Require the use of current disaggregated student achievement data to establish focused goals and measurable strategies for instruction and achievement.
4. Use data to set performance targets for each building and grade level, planning for the success of all children and designed to close achievement and expectation gaps for every subgroup of the population.
5. Ensure the skillful and accurate use of data by providing ongoing training and support throughout the organization.
6. Expect district administrators and principals to model and monitor use of data to inform instructional decisions.
7. Establish as a part of the central office, services to regularly review and analyze building-level data and to provide guidance for both district and building-level actions.

LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION:
❑ 1 ❑ 2 ❑ 3 ❑ 4

District Leadership Team

1. Establish and implement procedures and norms requiring the effective use of data at all levels of the system to drive improvement in instructional practice, to assess the impact on student achievement, and to make decisions about teaching and learning.
2. Model the effective use of data as an ongoing strategy to improve student performance.
3. Require the use of current aggregated and disaggregated student achievement data to establish district goals and measurable strategies for instruction and achievement.
4. Based on data analysis and interpretation, set performance targets for each building and grade level, planning for the success of all children and designed to close achievement and expectation gaps for every subgroup of the population.
5. Assist administrators in monitoring staff use of data to inform instructional decisions.
6. Provide training, support, and guidance in the effective use of data for building-level teams.

LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION:
❑ 1 ❑ 2 ❑ 3 ❑ 4

Building Leadership Team

1. Establish data teams (including course, grade level, grade band or vertical team, department) and implement procedures for the effective use of data to assess the impact on student learning, and to make decisions about teaching and learning.
2. Create a school culture that supports the effective use of data to improve student performance by organizing and presenting data in ways that identify gaps and trends in student performance and requiring intentional decisions regarding curriculum and instruction, interventions, and professional development.
3. Support the use of current aggregated and disaggregated student achievement data to establish measurable strategies aligned with district goals for instruction and achievement.
4. Ensure data teams use building, course, and classroom data to constantly monitor progress in meeting performance targets for the building and at each grade level, planning for the success of all children and designed to close achievement and expectation gaps.
5. Ensure the skillful and accurate use of data by providing ongoing training and support throughout the building.
6. Monitor staff use of data to inform instructional decisions and organization for learning (e.g., schedules, grading, grade-level configurations, interventions, etc.).
7. Provide support to all building-level data teams and regularly review and analyze building level data and to provide guidance for classroom level actions.

LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION:
❑ 1 ❑ 2 ❑ 3 ❑ 4

KEY:
1=Initiating: Planning for implementation
2=Emerging: Low level of implementation
3=Progressing: Moderate level of implementation
4=Accomplished: High level of implementation

AREA 2: FOCUSED GOAL SETTING PROCESS

Superintendent	District Leadership Team	Building Leadership Team

Area 2 emphasizes the importance of:

- Identifying – based on a review of data – a limited number of goals, and a limited number of strategies for each goal, that allow for concentrated focus on the core work that needs to be done to improve student performance.
- Aligning district work with district goals for instruction and achievement (i.e., defined as non-negotiable goals that are collaboratively developed, board adopted, and stable/sustainable over an extended period of time).
- Reducing the number of initiatives to align improvement efforts on a district-wide basis around two or three focused goals directly related to identified needs.
- Developing one plan, rather than multiple and often contradictory plans, aligned with the district goals.
- Internal accountability, which holds all adults in the system accountable for implementing evidence-based practices to improve teaching and learning.

Essential Practices

Use this reference guide to consider your level of implementation of each of the essential leadership practices.

Superintendent

1. Commit, in conjunction with the board of education, the district and all schools to make continuous progress toward meeting district goals and performance targets for instruction and achievement.
2. Ensure the collaborative development and ongoing monitoring of a single district improvement plan that focuses on a limited number of district goals.
3. Implement the district improvement plan with a limited number of focused district goals that are based on current aggregated and disaggregated student achievement data.
4. Establish and convey the district's vision and mission for guiding the collaborative development and communication of district goals.
5. Ensure that schools have focused building improvement plans that are clearly aligned to and designed to meet district goals.
6. Develop and implement an internal accountability system that holds the adults at all levels accountable for results.
7. Implement a sustainable system for monitoring progress and making adjustments to implementation of the district improvement plan.

LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION:
❑ 1 ❑ 2 ❑ 3 ❑ 4

District Leadership Team

1. Support the development and ongoing monitoring of a single district improvement plan (CIP) that focuses on a limited number of district goals.
2. Facilitate the implementation of the district improvement plan with a limited number of district goals that are based on current aggregated and disaggregated student achievement data.
3. Commit to continuous improvement toward meeting district goals.
4. Convey to all schools the district's vision and mission for guiding the collaborative development of district goals, and communicate performance targets to all buildings.
5. Ensure that schools have a focused school improvement plan (SIP) clearly aligned to and designed to meet the district's CIP.
6. Implement an internal accountability system that holds the adults at all levels accountable for results.
7. Monitor the progress of the district improvement plan and, based on current data, make necessary adjustments.

LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION:
❑ 1 ❑ 2 ❑ 3 ❑ 4

Building Leadership Team

1. Communicate to all staff how the district's vision and mission and focused goals relate to the school improvement plan (SIP).
2. Commit to the development, implementation and ongoing monitoring of the SIP (based on current aggregated and disaggregated student achievement data) aligned to the district's CIP.
3. Develop and implement internal accountability indicators for research-based/effective practices and objective performance that hold staff accountable for results.
4. Use a sustainable data-based system to monitor progress and make necessary adjustments to the implementation of the SIP.

LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION:
❑ 1 ❑ 2 ❑ 3 ❑ 4

AREA 3: INSTRUCTION AND THE LEARNING PROCESS

Superintendent	District Leadership Team	Building Leadership Team

Area 3 emphasizes the importance of:

- Focusing on 21st century skills, ensuring that all children combine core subject mastery with other significant skills, including critical thinking and problem solving, creativity and innovation, communication, and collaboration skills; information and communication technology literacy; life skills (leadership, ethics, personal productivity, self-directed learning); and twenty-first century content (global awareness and business fundamentals and economic literacy).
- Developing collaborative structures (e.g., district, department, building, grade-level teams) to facilitate communication, build trust and credibility, and stay focused on the collective and shared responsibility for improving student achievement.
- Providing full access to challenging content aligned with rigorous standards for all students and student groups as part of closing the achievement and expectation gap.

Essential Practices

Use this reference guide to consider your level of implementation of each of the essential leadership practices.

Superintendent

1. Require the district-wide use of an established curriculum aligned with district goals.
2. Ensure the development and implementation of high-quality standards-based instruction aligned with district goals.
3. Establish clear priorities among the district's instructional goals and strategies.
4. Require use of a process that accurately monitors implementation of the district's instructional program.
5. Ensure that the district curriculum and instructional program are designed to provide full access and opportunity to all students/student groups to meet district goals.
6. Require the systemic implementation and ongoing evaluation of prevention/intervention strategies as part of its instructional program to ensure that all students meet performance targets.
7. Require the frequent use of collaboratively developed common formative classroom assessments to gauge student progress and guide instructional planning toward meeting district goals.
8. Define and expect principals to fulfill instructional leader responsibilities.
9. Require administrators and building leadership teams (BLTs) to take action to ensure the progress of each student toward meeting district goals.

LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION:
❑ 1 ❑ 2 ❑ 3 ❑ 4

District Leadership Team

1. Support the implementation of high-quality standards-based instruction aligned with the district's curriculum and goals for instruction and achievement on a district-wide basis.
2. Assure that the district curriculum is the curriculum used in all schools.
3. Convey clear priorities among the district's instructional goals and strategies.
4. Ensure the delivery of high-quality instruction on a district-wide basis that is based on research-based practices, engages students, incorporates culturally responsive practices, and relies on ongoing assessment and progress monitoring to inform instruction.
5. Implement the process that accurately monitors the district's instructional program.
6. Monitor student achievement, ensuring that school instructional practices are designed to provide full access and opportunity to all students/student groups to meet district goals.
7. Ensure the systemic implementation and ongoing evaluation of prevention/intervention strategies as part of its instructional program to ensure that all students meet performance targets.
8. Require the frequent use of collaboratively developed common formative classroom assessments to gauge student progress and guide instructional planning toward meeting district goals.
9. Assist administrators in fulfilling instructional leader responsibilities.
10. Assist administrators and building leadership teams (BLTs) to effectively monitor the progress of all students in their building toward meeting district goals.

LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION:
❑ 1 ❑ 2 ❑ 3 ❑ 4

Building Leadership Team

1. Ensure that the established district curriculum is the curriculum used by all teachers in the school, and ensure instruction is aligned with the big ideas and essential questions embedded in the curriculum.
2. Establish priorities for instruction and achievement based on data and aligned with district goals.
3. Monitor the implementation of the school instructional program and the follow through on the implementation of the data team's specific recommendations for instructional strategies.
4. Ensure the delivery of high-quality instruction on a school-wide basis that is based on research-based practices, engages students, incorporates culturally responsive practices, and relies on ongoing assessment and progress monitoring to inform instruction.
5. Require the systemic implementation and ongoing evaluation of prevention/intervention strategies as part of the building's instructional program to ensure that all students meet performance targets.
6. Require the frequent use of collaboratively developed common formative classroom assessments to gauge student progress toward meeting district goals.
7. Monitor student achievement, ensuring that each student has access to high quality instruction and is making progress toward meeting the district's CIP.

LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION:
❑ 1 ❑ 2 ❑ 3 ❑ 4

AREA 4: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Superintendent	District Leadership Team	Building Leadership Team

Area 4 emphasizes the importance of:

- Meaningfully involving all relevant stakeholders to assist the superintendent and board in establishing district goals.
- Gaining support for needed improvements and to sustain a focus on district goals.
- Managing change needed to improve student achievement.
- Assessing the effectiveness of the community engagement process.
- Engaging both internal and external community members, defined as those individuals who affect or are affected by the success of the district [typical stakeholder groups include students, teachers, paraprofessionals, support staff, school administrators, students' immediate family members, school board members, community leaders, local business and industry representatives, and citizens who live in the community(ies)].

Essential Practices

Use this reference guide to consider your level of implementation of each of the essential leadership practices.

Superintendent	District Leadership Team	Building Leadership Team
1. Collaborate effectively with internal and external community members in the development and support of district goals. 2. Communicate clear expectations with regard to district goals. 3. Offer opportunities for meaningful input and feedback from internal and external community members with regard to district goals. 4. Ensure that partnership activities are focused on district goals. 5. Provide for training/support as needed by internal and external community members to enable them to meaningfully participate in activities aligned with district goals.	1. Collaborate effectively with internal and external community members in the development and support of district goals. 2. Communicate clear expectations with regard to district goals. 3. Offer opportunities for meaningful input and feedback from internal and external community members with regard to district goals. 4. Develop partnerships focused on district goals. 5. Provide training/support needed by internal and external community members to enable them to meaningfully participate in activities aligned with district goals.	1. Ensure that building strategies/action steps for instruction and achievement are aligned with district goals. 2. Engage internal and external community members in establishing and supporting building-level strategies/action steps for improving instruction and achievement. 3. Communicate clear expectations with regard to building-level strategies/action steps for improving instruction and achievement on an ongoing basis. 4. Offer opportunities for meaningful input and feedback from internal and external community members with regard to building-level strategies/action steps for improving for instruction and achievement. 5. Develop collaborative partnerships aligned with building-level strategies/action steps for improving for instruction and achievement. 6. Provide for training/support needed by internal and external community members to enable them to meaningfully participate in activities aligned with building-level strategies/action steps for improving for instruction and achievement.
LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION: ❑ 1 ❑ 2 ❑ 3 ❑ 4	**LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION:** ❑ 1 ❑ 2 ❑ 3 ❑ 4	**LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION:** ❑ 1 ❑ 2 ❑ 3 ❑ 4

AREA 5: RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROCESS

Superintendent	District Leadership Team	Building Leadership Team

Area 5 emphasizes the importance of:

- Broadening the definition of resource management to include the management of time, money, staff, and programmatic resources, emphasizing the importance of directing effort toward student achievement.
- Including the district business manager/director of business operations/treasurer as an integral member of the district leadership team.
- Maintaining shared central office and school authority over major resource decisions, focusing district and building meetings on learning and instruction, using performance data to guide program decisions, investing in targeted professional development aligned with identified needs, and investing in academic support programs to narrow or close achievement gaps.
- Making "proactive, highly intentional decisions" about the equitable (as compared to equal) allocation of resources to achieve the district's non-negotiable goals.
- Advocating for the generation of additional funding aligned with meeting district goals.

Essential Practices

Use this reference guide to consider your level of implementation of each of the essential leadership practices.

Superintendent

1. Focus the use of district resources, including time as well as staff, programmatic, and monetary resources to support district goals.
2. Use data to inform the budget process and ensure that appropriate resources are allocated to support the district's continuous improvement plan (CIP).
3. Support the effective use of data to improve focused planning and instruction on a district-wide basis.
4. Support and equitably allocate resources to principals and their schools to meet the district's CIP and school improvement plan (SIP).
5. Establish procedures to screen, interview and select staff based on district goals.
6. Develop and implement a system for staff performance reviews aligned with district goals.
7. Provide for extensive job-embedded professional development for all staff aligned with district goals.
8. Eliminate initiatives that are not aligned with district goals, or are ineffective in meeting district goals.

LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION:
❑ 1 ❑ 2 ❑ 3 ❑ 4

District Leadership Team

1. Assess and make recommendations to the superintendent regarding financial and capital management aligned to district goals for instruction and achievement.
2. Use data to inform the budget process and allocate district resources to support district goals.
3. Allocate equitable and appropriate time, training, and resources to support the effective use of data to improve focused planning and instruction on a district-wide basis.
4. Assess and make recommendations to the superintendent regarding human resource development (including developing others as leaders) aligned to district goals.
5. Assess and make recommendations to the superintendent regarding scheduling aligned to district goals.
6. Support and allocate resources to schools to meet district goals.
7. Screen, interview and select staff based on district goals.
8. Establish and implement supervisory systems that ensure progress toward meeting district goals.
9. Provide for extensive job-embedded professional development aligned with district goals.
10. Identify initiatives not aligned with or ineffective in meeting district goals that should be eliminated.

LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION:
❑ 1 ❑ 2 ❑ 3 ❑ 4

Building Leadership Team

1. Use data to inform the budget process and allocate building resources to support building-level strategies/action steps for improving instruction and achievement.
2. Use resources to provide training on the effective use of data for planning and instruction.
3. Screen, interview and select staff based on building-level strategies/action steps for improving instruction and achievement.
4. Align staff performance reviews with building-level strategies/action steps for improving instruction and achievement.
5. Make recommendations for human resource development (including developing others as leaders) with building-level strategies/action steps for improving instruction and achievement.
6. Make recommendations for human resource deployment (teacher assignment, staffing patterns) with building-level strategies/action steps for improving instruction and achievement.
7. Provide for extensive job-embedded professional development aligned with building-level strategies/action steps for improving instruction and achievement.
8. Make recommendations regarding scheduling and time management based on building-level strategies/action steps for improving instruction and achievement.
9. Eliminate initiatives that are not aligned with or are ineffective in meeting building-level strategies/action steps for improving instruction and achievement.

LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION:
❑ 1 ❑ 2 ❑ 3 ❑ 4

AREA 6: BOARD DEVELOPMENT AND GOVERNANCE PROCESS

Superintendent	District Leadership Team	Building Leadership Team

Area 6 emphasizes the importance of:

- The board's involvement in the development and approval of district goals, as well as the board's support for the district's goals for achievement and instruction, ensuring that these goals remain the primary focus of district efforts.
- The relationship of superintendent continuity to increases in student performance.
- Principal and teacher leadership in improving student achievement.
- Engaging multiple constituencies to gain support for needed improvements and to sustain a focus on district goals.
- The moral imperative of maintaining a student-centered focus and ensuring that improvement efforts are designed to ensure the success of every child.
- Shared understanding of the roles of the superintendent and board members.

Essential Practices

Use this reference guide to consider your level of implementation of each of the essential leadership practices.

Superintendent

1. Keep the purpose of ensuring the success of every student central to all decisions.
2. Work in partnership with board members to adopt and review all policies in meeting the district goals.
3. Report student achievement data and progress on district goals to the board on a regular and frequent basis.
4. Maintain high expectations for district and school performance.
5. Continually promote high expectations so that all internal and external stakeholders can articulate district goals.
6. Provide opportunities for and encourage board member participation in professional development aligned with district priorities.

LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION:
❑ 1 ❑ 2 ❑ 3 ❑ 4

District Leadership Team

1. Keep the purpose of ensuring the success of every student central to all decisions.
2. Support the superintendent's work in partnership with board members to adopt and continually review progress toward meeting district goals.
3. Provide data and reports to the superintendent to inform the board as part of policy governance.
4. Maintain high expectations for district and school performance.
5. Continually promote high expectations so that all internal and external community members can articulate district goals.
6. Support the provision of professional development aligned with district priorities for board members.

LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION:
❑ 1 ❑ 2 ❑ 3 ❑ 4

Building Leadership Team

1. Work in partnership with district leadership to continually review the school's progress toward meeting the building-level strategies/action steps aligned with district goals.
2. Keep the purpose of ensuring the success of every student central to all decisions.
3. Ensure that monitoring implementation of the building improvement plan is a standing agenda item of school staff meetings.
4. Continually communicate high expectations for school performance.
5. Continually promote high expectations so that all internal and external community members can articulate the building-level strategies/action steps for improving instruction and achievement.
6. Promote shared leadership through the effective use of professional learning communities and building-level data teams aligned with the building-level strategies/action steps for improving instruction and achievement.

LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION:
❑ 1 ❑ 2 ❑ 3 ❑ 4

"Students in public schools benefit from an environment fostered through shared leadership. Teacher leaders are essential to the collaborative decision-making process and innovation required to provide a quality education for all children."

Deborah Tully
Director of Professional Issues
Ohio Federation of Teachers

Essential Practices for Building Leadership Teams

Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) describe the development of a strong building leadership team (BLT) and the distribution – throughout the team – of some of the 21 practices that characterize the job of an effective principal as key steps in enhancing student achievement (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Such practices, identified through McREL's meta-analysis of 35 years of research on school-level leadership, suggests that leading a building requires a "complex array of skills" not likely to be found in a single individual and support the need for a strong leadership team. Selecting the right work (i.e., work that has a high probability of improving student achievement), identifying the order of magnitude implied by the selected work, and matching strengths of leadership team members to the kind of changes needed (first-order or second-order) for significantly improving student achievement are other key components of developing a plan for effective leadership. These leadership functions are reflected in the *Ohio Standards for Principals*.

Selecting the right work based on data-based decision-making and focused planning, as well as developing the collective know-how to do the right work often require the implementation of new collaborative structures and processes for aligning shared responsibility, expectations, and accountability across the school. Michael Fullan, professor of policy studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto and recognized expert in educational reform and organizational turnaround, encourages districts and schools to understand that all successful improvement strategies are socially based and action oriented. In other words, all successful turnarounds develop collaboration where there was none before, highlighting the need to improve relationships as a core strategy of effective improvement.

BLTs can play a pivotal role in fostering shared leadership and responsibility for the success of every child through the creation of purposeful communities at the school level. Marzano, Waters, & McNulty (2005) define a purposeful community as one with the collective efficacy and capability to develop and use assets to accomplish goals that matter to all community members through agreed-upon processes. In Ohio's schools of promise/schools of distinction, it is this sense of collective efficacy – or the shared belief on the part of staff that they can make a difference in children's lives – that is integral to improving student performance on a school-wide basis.

"Educational leadership is not about managing a school district. The challenge is not only to do things right but rather to do the right things. Leadership is not communicating a plan or a solution; it is sharing a vision with staff, students, and the many publics served by public education."

Tom Ash
Director of Governmental Relations
Buckeye Association of School Administrators

Shared leadership structures through high-performing BLTs also provide greater opportunities for teacher leadership inside and outside of the classroom where teacher leaders take on a variety of differentiated roles and responsibilities, such as learning facilitators, instructional specialists, curriculum specialists, data coaches, learner, mentor, and catalyst for change (Harrison, C., & Killion, K., 2007).

In addition to supporting improvement in instructional practice on a school-wide basis through teacher leadership, the leadership functions of the BLT would include such tasks as building a school culture that supports effective data-driven decision-making; establishing priorities for instruction and achievement aligned with district goals; providing opportunities for teachers to learn from each other; monitoring and providing effective feedback on student progress; supporting the development, implementation, and monitoring of focused building improvement strategies/plans; and making recommendations for the management of resources, including time and personnel, to meet district and building goals.

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Related Resources

– *Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession*

– *Ohio Standards for Principals*

– *Ohio Standards for Professional Development*

Brian McNulty and Kathleen Lowery

"Great minds discuss ideas, average minds discuss events, small minds discuss people.

[Admiral Hyman Rickover (1900-1986) U. S. Navy]

Relationship to education: Educators must encourage and teach innovation and creativity in students so they are attracted to educational and workplace environments that challenge them intellectually to focus on ideas and creative solutions to problems. We must foster environments that create great minds."

Martha Rothey
Past President
Ohio School Boards Association

Area 1: Data and the Decision-Making Process – Building Leadership Team

- *Importance of identifying, collecting, analyzing and effectively using relevant data to identify greatest problems to be addressed, and to create the kind of culture and expectation that supports effective data-based decision-making at all levels of the system.*
- *Importance of the need to disaggregate data by subgroup to understand and address gaps between students based on race, poverty, English proficiency, and identified disability.*
- *Importance of developing shared accountability by broadening the concept of accountability to include "internal" measures that hold all adults accountable for improved student performance, rather than only external accountability imposed from outside.*
- *Importance of using data to continuously monitor student progress against performance targets and district established goals.*
- *Importance of addressing achievement and growth, and in getting past opinion through use of data and research-based practices.*

Essential Practices

1. Establish data teams (including course, grade level, grade band or vertical team, department) and implement procedures for the effective use of data to assess the impact on student learning, and to make decisions about teaching and learning.
2. Create a school culture that supports the effective use of data to improve student performance by organizing and presenting data in ways that identify gaps and trends in student performance and requiring intentional decisions regarding curriculum and instruction, interventions, and professional development.
3. Support the use of current aggregated and disaggregated student achievement data to establish measurable strategies aligned with district goals for instruction and achievement.
4. Ensure data teams use building, course, and classroom data to constantly monitor progress in meeting performance targets for the building and at each grade level, planning for the success of all children and designed to close achievement and expectation gaps.
5. Ensure the skillful and accurate use of data by providing ongoing training and support throughout the building.
6. Monitor staff use of data to inform instructional decisions and organization for learning (e.g., schedules, grading, grade-level configurations, interventions, etc.).
7. Provide support to all building-level data teams and regularly review and analyze building-level data and to provide guidance for classroom-level actions.

"Leadership matters! The strength of a district lies in its ability to nurture and support a cadre of courageous leaders who are passionate about their work and who serve as tireless advocates for all children."

Deborah Delisle
Superintendent
Cleveland Heights-University Heights City Schools

Area 2: Focused Goal Setting Process – Building Leadership Team

- *Importance of identifying – based on a review of data – a limited number of strategies for addressing district goals, which allow for concentrated focus on the core work that needs to be done to improve student performance.*
- *Importance of reducing the number of initiatives to align improvement efforts on a district-wide basis around two or three focused goals directly related to identified needs.*
- *Importance of developing one plan, rather than multiple and often contradictory plans, aligned with district goals.*

Essential Practices

1. Communicate to all staff how the district's vision and mission and focused goals relate to the school improvement plan (SIP).
2. Commit to the development, implementation and ongoing monitoring of the SIP (based on current aggregated and disaggregated student achievement data) aligned to the district's CIP.
3. Develop and implement internal accountability indicators for research-based/effective practices and objective performance that hold staff accountable for results.
4. Use a sustainable data-based system to monitor progress and make necessary adjustments to the implementation of the SIP.

Tecumseh district leadership team members Cindy Fisher and Karyl Strader

"Strong leadership at all level is vital for creating culturally responsive learning communities where adults work to ensure that all students regardless of their background feel that their culture is respected, understand the relevance of school-based learning experiences and life success, have a genuine connection to the school community, experience adults who are responsive to student needs and where high expectations for all are demonstrated through consistent rigorous instruction that is research-based and reflects high standards."

Seena M. Skelton
Coordinator, Diversity in Education Collaborative/State Support Team Region 13

Area 3: Instruction and the Learning Process – Building Leadership Team

- *Importance of a focus on 21st century skills, ensuring that all children combine core subject mastery with other significant skills, including critical thinking and problem solving, creativity and innovation, communication, and collaboration skills; information and communication technology literacy; life skills (leadership, ethics, personal productivity, self-directed learning); and twenty-first century content (global awareness and business fundamentals and economic literacy).*
- *Importance of developing collaborative structures (e.g., district, department, building, grade-level teams) to facilitate communication, build trust and credibility, and stay focused on the collective and shared responsibility for improving student achievement.*
- *Importance of providing full access to challenging content aligned with rigorous standards for all students and student groups as part of closing the achievement and expectation gap.*

Essential Practices

1. Ensure that the established district curriculum is the curriculum used by all teachers in the school, and ensure instruction is aligned with the big ideas and essential questions embedded in the curriculum.
2. Establish priorities for instruction and achievement based on data and aligned with district goals.
3. Monitor the implementation of the school instructional program and the follow through on the implementation of the data team's specific recommendations for instructional strategies.
4. Ensure the delivery of high-quality instruction on a school-wide basis that is based on research-based practices, engages students, incorporates culturally responsive practices, and relies on ongoing assessment and progress monitoring to inform instruction.
5. Require the systemic implementation and ongoing evaluation of prevention/intervention strategies as part of the building's instructional program to ensure that all students meet performance targets.
6. Require the frequent use of collaboratively developed common formative classroom assessments to gauge student progress toward meeting district goals.
7. Monitor student achievement, ensuring that each student has access to high quality instruction and is making progress toward meeting the district's CIP.

Area 4: Community Engagement Process – Building Leadership Team

- *Importance of meaningfully involving all relevant stakeholders to assist the superintendent and board members in establishing district goals.*
- *Importance of engaging multiple constituencies to gain support for needed improvements and to sustain a focus on district goals around instruction and achievement.*
- *Importance of managing change needed to improve student achievement.*
- *Importance of engaging both internal and external community members, defined as those individuals who affect or are affected by the success of the district [typical stakeholder groups include students, teachers, paraprofessionals, support staff, school administrators, students' immediate family members, school board members, community leaders, local business and industry representatives, and citizens who live in the community(ies)].*

Steven Raines and Ted Zigler

Essential Practices

1. Ensure that building strategies/action steps for instruction and achievement are aligned with district goals.
2. Engage internal and external community members in establishing and supporting building-level strategies/action steps for improving instruction and achievement.
3. Communicate clear expectations with regard to building-level strategies/action steps for improving instruction and achievement on an ongoing basis.
4. Offer opportunities for meaningful input and feedback from internal and external community members with regard to building-level strategies/action steps for improving instruction and achievement.
5. Develop collaborative partnerships aligned with building-level strategies/action steps for improving instruction and achievement.
6. Provide for training/support needed by internal and external community members to enable them to meaningfully participate in activities aligned with building-level strategies/action steps for improving instruction and achievement.

"Our role as educational leaders is to prepare students for a future that we will never see."

David Root
Principal
Rocky River Middle School

Area 5: Resource Management Process – Building Leadership Team

- *Importance of broadening the definition of resource management to include the management of time, money, staff, and programmatic resources, emphasizing the importance of directing effort toward student achievement.*
- *Importance of maintaining shared central office and school authority over major resource decisions.*
- *Importance of focusing school meetings on learning and instruction.*
- *Importance of using performance data to guide program decisions, investing in targeted professional development aligned with identified needs, and investing in academic support programs to narrow or close achievement gaps.*
- *Importance of making "proactive, highly intentional decisions" about the equitable (as compared to equal) allocation of resources to implement the school's strategies/action steps aligned with district goals.*

Essential Practices

1. Use data to inform the budget process and allocate building resources to support building-level strategies/action steps for improving instruction and achievement.
2. Use resources to provide training on the effective use of data for planning and instruction.
3. Screen, interview and select staff based on building-level strategies/action steps for improving instruction and achievement.
4. Align staff performance reviews with building-level strategies/action steps for improving instruction and achievement.
5. Make recommendations for human resource development (including developing others as leaders) with building-level strategies/action steps for improving instruction and achievement.
6. Make recommendations for human resource deployment (teacher assignment, staffing patterns) with building-level strategies/action steps for improving instruction and achievement.
7. Provide for extensive job-embedded professional development aligned with building-level strategies/action steps for improving instruction and achievement.
8. Make recommendations regarding scheduling and time management based on building-level strategies/action steps for improving instruction and achievement.
9. Eliminate initiatives that are not aligned with or are ineffective in meeting building-level strategies/action steps for improving instruction and achievement.

"A wise man once told me that educational leadership is not a spectator sport. As such, leaders should be seen planning and implementing. They should have a firm foundation of what they believe in and work collaboratively to create the values of the district and schools with a sense of conviction and articulate them at every opportunity."

Jim Lloyd
Assistant Superintendent of Academic Services & Professional Development
Olmsted Falls City Schools

Area 6: Building Governance Process – Building Leadership Team

- *Importance of the board's involvement in the development and approval of district goals, as well as the board's support for district goals for achievement and instruction, ensuring that these goals remain the primary focus of district and school efforts.*
- *Importance of principal and teacher leadership in improving student achievement.*
- *Importance of engaging multiple constituencies to gain support for needed improvements and to sustain a focus on district goals around instruction and achievement.*
- *Importance of the moral imperative of maintaining a student-centered focus and ensuring that improvement efforts are designed to ensure the success of every child.*

Essential Practices

1. Work in partnership with district leadership to continually review the school's progress toward meeting the building-level strategies/action steps aligned with district goals.
2. Keep the purpose of ensuring the success of every student central to all decisions.
3. Ensure that monitoring implementation of the building improvement plan is a standing agenda item of school staff meetings.
4. Continually communicate high expectations for school performance.
5. Continually promote high expectations so that all internal and external community members can articulate the building-level strategies/action steps for improving instruction and achievement.
6. Promote shared leadership through the effective use of professional learning communities and building-level data teams aligned with the building-level strategies/action steps for improving instruction and achievement.

Part IV: Moving Forward: Building on OLAC's Work

"Public school leadership is more complicated than ever. The next generation of school leaders must be prepared to anticipate rapid change while responding to state and federal policymakers, internal and external constituencies, and, above all, the urgent need to support teaching and learning. Cultivation of leaders for the emerging environment must be based not only on theories learned in graduate school, but also on the practical, real-world experiences of colleagues."

Mark Freeman
Superintendent
Shaker Heights City Schools

Ohio's Leadership Development Framework defines what is expected from superintendents, district leadership teams and building leadership teams and completes Phase I of this partnership effort. The remaining two phases build on the work of Phase I and move the state closer to its goal of a coherent and cohesive leadership development system designed to improve the performance of all students.

OLAC began Phase II of its work in March 2008 with the establishment of three subcommittees – all co-chaired by existing or new members:

Superintendent Committee
Co-chairs: Deborah Delisle, Superintendent, Cleveland Heights-University Heights City Schools; and Wade Lucas, Superintendent, Green Local Schools

District Leadership Team (DLT) Committee
Co-chairs: Keith Bell, Principal, Westerville South High School; and Jim Lloyd, Assistant Superintendent, Olmsted Falls City Schools

Building Leadership Team (BLT) Committee
Co-chairs: Deborah Tully, Professional Issues Coordinator, Ohio Federation of Teachers; and Jim Harbuck, Associate Executive Director, Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators

Committee work is focused on the development of on-line performance assessment and professional development (PD) aligned with the essential practices for superintendents, DLTs, and BLTs that are outlined in this framework. As part of this work, committee members provide input into the development of on-line performance assessment to ensure that it is descriptive and reflective of exemplary practice. Committee members serve as the body that reviews draft PD content as it is developed, offering feedback and recommendations, and identifying resources and exemplars to inform, enhance, and/or illustrate the PD content. Committee members consider feedback about the utility of the framework, and associated tools, from district and building teams that pilot the performance assessment and PD, and report back to OLAC.

OLAC will continue to serve as an advisory body and will oversee the work of the committees. In addition to the continued development of tools and products, OLAC members will make presentations about and assist in communicating the work of OLAC, will advise the Buckeye Association of School Administrators and the Ohio Department of Education on the development of a roll-out strategy, as well as effective strategies for deploying PD to allow for universal access and applicability to all districts in the state.

Phase III of OLAC's work is anticipated to begin some time after January 2009 and will focus on a refinement of the tools and products, the development of a process for identifying, on an ongoing basis, initiatives that are aligned with the OLAC essential practices, and the consideration of policy issues and implications associated with the work that need to be addressed to improve instructional practice and student performance.

Part V: Appendices

Appendix A: Presentations Made to OLAC

Focus on Central Office Alignment

Coherence & Accountability: Effective District Leadership Team Behaviors

Akron Public Schools District Leadership Team

Focus on Effective District wide Data Use

Establishing a Culture of Achievement: Using Data to Develop Focused Goals for Improvement

Tecumseh Local Schools District Leadership Team

Focus on Collaborative Learning Communities

Applying Essential Leadership Behaviors at the School and District Level to Improve Student Performance

William Hart, Ph.D., Assistant Superintendent, Pentucket Regional School District, West Newbury, MA

Focus on Superintendent-Board Relations

The Role of the Board, Superintendent, and Leadership Team in Implementing Policy to Support Higher Achievement for All Students

Oregon City Schools District Leadership Team

Focus on Teacher Leadership

Distributive Leadership – Sharing the Work

Cleveland Heights-University Heights City Schools District Leadership Team

Focus on Central Office Alignment

Coherence & Accountability: Effective District Leadership Team Behaviors

Akron Public Schools District Leadership Team

Akron district leadership team members Mary Mayer, Sylvester Small, Bernie Burchett, and Sue Long

Akron's work has focused on breaking down silos and fostering coherence and alignment across the district around a few focused goals – all designed to improve instructional practice and student attainment for all learners. Akron's district leadership team (DLT) believes that leaders in coherent districts work collaboratively toward one goal – high quality teaching and learning. The journey in Akron toward improved student achievement began with Superintendent Sylvester Small and Assistant Superintendent Sue Long demanding focus, high expectations for all students, the use of one unified process to eliminate silos, and a commitment to staying the course. As a result, Akron has resisted jumping at the "next best cure," has refused to accept funds that don't perfectly match their mission, and has aligned all work to one mission and one set of goals.

Akron's mission to ensure that "…each student in our diverse population achieves his or her fullest potential in a safe and affirming learning center" is being realized through the district's commitment to focusing on student needs. Three key questions, based on the work of Rick DuFour (2002), have guided decision making in the district:

1. What do we expect all students to learn?
2. How will we know if they are learning it?
3. What will we do when they don't?

All work across the district is driven by the district's single coherent improvement plan. At the district level, a philosophy of "all work is our work" pervades district meetings. There are no separate department reports and district leadership team agendas are focused on the work that needs to be done to meet district goals. At the building level, each school's improvement plan is aligned with the district goals and is used to drive teaching and learning. Student needs are plotted on a Pyramid of Learning chart, a strategy for identifying and consistently embedding effective prevention and intervention strategies as part of Akron's instructional program.

The effective use of data and data teams to guide decision making and continuous improvement; a commitment to gaining active engagement from families and the community; the practice of working in collaborative teams focused on teaching and learning, rather than in isolation; the effective use of professional development as a strategy to meet district needs; and the intentional use of resources to meet district goals are highlights of Akron's approach, which have resulted in steady progress and improvement.

Focus on Effective District-Wide Data Use

Establishing a Culture of Achievement: Using Data to Develop Focused Goals for Improvement

Tecumseh Local Schools District Leadership Team

Tecumseh district leadership team members

Effective district leaders recognize that the real work of increasing student achievement happens at the classroom level and organize the system around improving this work. For example, Tecumseh Local central office administrators used grant money to allow teachers to work over the summer to design a teacher friendly data collection system. Now, instead of paper forms, all teachers submit data to their principals electronically. Principals meet at the end of each quarter to discuss the district data and to analyze how their building data fit into the bigger picture. On a grade level and classroom basis, teachers monitor student progress frequently and provide targeted interventions to increase student learning.

Effective school districts constantly work on building a positive culture where learning is a priority for both students and adults; where it's OK to take risks because there is an atmosphere of support that enables everyone to succeed. Tools like data management systems are useful only as part of strong classroom, building and district cultures. District leadership helps to build culture by establishing a shared set of values and goals, and modeling expected behaviors. For example, the Tecumseh Local central office team has built a culture where learning is a high priority. The mission of the district is "Learning for all, whatever it takes." Data are used as a part of this culture to help staff determine what instructional decisions are working for kids. The role of central office, especially in small districts like Tecumseh Local, is very much a focus on supporting the work of staff to attain higher achievement for all students. It is the role of central office personnel to maintain the focus of the schools on high student achievement, and then provide the support that staff need to increase learning for all children.

Tecumseh Local district leadership team members review student performance data

In the Tecumseh Local School district two elements are key to making this happen. First, the superintendent and assistant superintendent are knowledgeable about curriculum, student learning and district data. They model the importance of student achievement by placing this goal first on every administrative agenda and every communication to staff. Steven Covey calls this "keeping the main thing, the main thing." Secondly, structures and processes are put in place to make the work of principals and teachers easier, more efficient, and most importantly, more effective.

At the building level, building leadership teams, goal teams and grade-level/department teams meet on a regular basis to review data and adjust instruction to better meet the needs of students. Teachers constantly monitor which strategies are effective and which are not. Elementary teachers have kept detailed records for several years so

Tecumseh elementary school student charts her progress against classroom targets.

that they can predict, based on a child's Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) score, even in first grade, the percent likelihood of that child's passing the third grade reading achievement test. Every child who is not on track is provided with intervention to address his/her specific needs through a process that teachers call "flexi-groups." The culture of the district also gives students control over their own learning. Students keep their own data folders, monitor how close they are to achieving their goals and put plans in place when progress is not what they want it to be.

When Tecumseh Local first began the short-cycle assessment process nearly five years ago, teachers met during the summer to identify power standards and align instruction across the grades. Communication within buildings is facilitated by regularly scheduled grade level and department meetings, goal team meetings and Building Leadership Team meetings. This type of structure provides for both vertical and horizontal communication. Classroom teachers communicate with parents on a regular basis through weekly class newsletters that include information on class progress toward reaching goals. Many teachers also use student-led conferences where students share their personal data with their parents and work together to set goals.

District communication with staff and the community, just as at the other levels, is regular and routine. Monthly superintendent e-letters go to members of the local community in addition to the quarterly district newsletter that is mailed to each resident. The full administrative team meets once each month with an agenda organized around the district goals.

Focus on Collaborative Learning Communities

Applying Essential Leadership Behaviors at the School and District Level to Improve Student Performance

William Hart, Ph.D., Assistant Superintendent, Pentucket Regional School District, West Newbury, MA

Leominster High School's journey to reform instructional practice began with a data-driven strategic planning process focused on identifying needs and desired results. At Leominster, an urban high school serving about 2,000 students representing around 43 different cultures, the 150+ faculty members began a thoughtful search for a reform model that could help them improve instructional opportunities and outcomes for all students. After deliberate study and exploration involving school-wide teams and teams from various aspects of the school, faculty selected the development of smaller learning communities as their reform model and began the development of five semi-autonomous small schools. Participation

with the Coalition of Essential Schools, the Center for Collaborative Education, and the New England Small School Network provided resources, support and assistance to Leominster.

William Hart

While the strategy to develop smaller learning communities provided a vehicle for bringing staff together in focused conversation, Bill Hart – then Leominster's headmaster – is quick to point out that structural changes alone are not the most important factor in Leominster's success. Rather, it was the creation of a collaborative culture focused on improving instruction that made the difference. Focused goal setting and decision making, shared leadership, common planning time and critical friends groups, and focused attention on enhancing assessment practices have contributed to increased student performance.

Implementation of the small schools model was guided by design teams that ensured alignment with goals; a focus on instruction, curriculum, and assessment; student support; collaboration; research and renewal; professional culture, and family and community involvement. Identifying what children will need to be successful drives the work, with special attention devoted to core subjects, learning and innovation skills (e.g., critical thinking, problem solving, communication and collaboration), and life and career skills (e.g., flexibility and adaptation, self-direction, social and cross-cultural skills, leadership and responsibility).

Bill Hart believes that school boards, superintendents, leadership teams, principals, and teachers working together can and will create the schools we describe, and suggested that, regardless of the reform model/strategy selected, improvement should be guided by two key questions:

1. What type of school do you want your child to attend?
2. What knowledge, skills, and dispositions will they need to have successful careers, participate fully in our democracy, and have fulfilling personal lives?

Oregon Board of Education member Cathy Johnson (at podium) with Oregon treasurer Jane Fruth and assistant superintendent James Kanable

Focus on Superintendent-Board Relations

The Role of the Board, Superintendent, and Leadership Team in Implementing Policy to Support Higher Achievement for All Students

Oregon City Schools District Leadership Team

The importance of a strong relationship between the superintendent and school board members in improving outcomes for children was highlighted by the Oregon City School District leadership team, as was the critical role of the treasurer in ensuring that resources are aligned to meet district goals. Quoting Chilean writer Gabriela Mistral (1889-1957), team members said "many things we need can wait, the children cannot. Now is the time his bones are formed. To him we cannot say tomorrow, his name is today."

Board members are instrumental in setting policy that directs and affects all aspects of the district and include curriculum and board policy, personnel, financial, extracurricular/school support, appropriations and budget, and building and grounds/transportation. Board members, the superintendent and members of the leadership team work together to implement board policy designed to support higher achievement for all students.

The Ohio School Boards Association describes the role of the board as the "keeper of the vision" with a focus on what, why, and how much, stating that "a school board that is serious about leadership will push itself to make decisions it knows are right." Similarly, the National School Boards Association outlines the role of the board as they work with the superintendent and members of the community to set and realize the district's vision. Key actions include establishing a clear vision of student achievement as a top priority, setting clear standards for student performance, establishing assessment and strong accountability processes, aligning resources to focus on students meeting the standards, creating a positive learning climate for student and staff success, building collaborative relationships, and committing to continuous improvement for student achievement.

The Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL), in its study on the effect of superintendent leadership on student achievement (2006), also cited the importance of board alignment with and support of district goals and establishing agreement with the board president on district goals.

The role of Oregon City's Board of Education in influencing and making a difference in student achievement and in supporting the implementation of essential leadership practices across the district was clearly evident and fostered through a commitment to collaboration and putting children first.

Focus on Teacher Leadership

Distributive Leadership – Sharing the Work

Cleveland Heights-University Heights City Schools

Lita Gonzalez, parent and member of the Cleveland Heights High School shared governance team (The MOSAIC Experience)

Cleveland Heights - University Heights City School District (CHUH) is an inner ring district with an 82 percent minority student population and more than 50 percent of its students are eligible for free and reduced lunches. It has made significant progress by district-level administrators, school board members, building principals, teacher leaders, grade-level and department teams of teachers, and parents working together to make instructional decisions.

This commitment to sharing the work, as opposed to the traditional practice of working in isolation, is credited by the district as resulting in significant progress in student performance (e.g., an increase in just one year from 53.3% to 81.8% passage rates in math for third graders at Boulevard Elementary School). Improvement in student performance is being seen in buildings across the district and the faculty and staff of CHUH believe in "doing whatever it takes" to improve outcomes for every child.

In addition to a "no excuses" philosophy, CHUH believes in focused planning and monitoring, continuous improvement, research and innovation, raising expectations of all, building capacity and opportunities for collaboration, and internal coherence.

A guiding principle in the CHUH district is the belief that the key to academic improvement lies in the professional practices of its teachers and administrators, not the economic, ethnic, or linguistic characteristics of its students. Because of this belief, CHUH has been intentional in changing practices and raising expectations, building the capacity of leaders (e.g., teacher leaders), implementing consistent practices across the district, restructuring K-12 meetings, and changing the role of central office administrators.

Several initiatives have emerged from CHUH's commitment to changing professional practice, which include transforming the high school to small schools, instituting a One-to-One Teaching and Learning with Technology initiative, expanding partnerships (e.g., redefining K-20 education through professional development schools, preschool Chinese program with Sesame Place), emphasizing effective data use, and building the leadership capacity of principals, teachers, and parent/community members.

All work in the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District is focused on students and the district leadership team is committed to providing every student with high quality experiences in and out of the classroom – *every student, every day, some success, some way.*

Cleveland Heights-University Heights teacher leader program specialist Traci Jenkins

Appendix B: References

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Members of the Cleveland Heights-University Heights leadership team (from left) Assistant Superintendent Christine Fowler-Mack, Principal James Reed, Teacher Leader Robert Swaggard, and Principal Kelli Cogan

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Additional Notes

Achievement: Using Data to Develop Focused Goals for Improvement

Additional Notes

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