ONTARIO LEADERSHIP STRATEGY

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Ideas into Action is published by the Ministry of Education to support Ontario's school and system leaders. It is designed to provide research insights and practical strategies for school and system leadership that are aligned with both the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) and the broader Ontario Leadership Strategy (OLS). This and future issues during 2009/10 will focus on the five Core Leadership Capacities and assist leaders in further strengthening and integrating these capacities into their daily practice. You will find more information about Leadership Development on the ministry website. If you have any comments or suggestions, please contact us at: ldb-ddl@ontario.ca
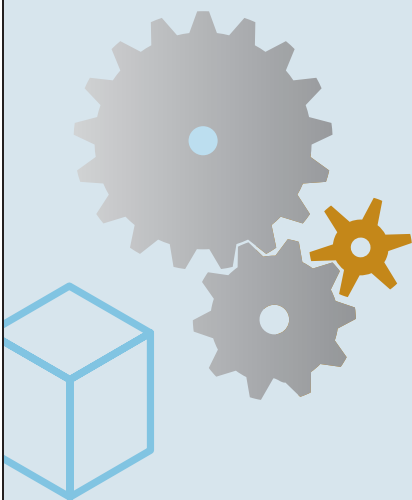
Five Core Capacities *of* Effective Leaders

What does effective leadership look like? What key leadership capacities will help us leverage our time, energy and resources – as individuals and as a system – to generate results?

In this issue of *Ideas into Action* we present a brief overview of the five Core Leadership Capacities (CLC) derived from Ontario's Leadership Framework that have been adopted by the Ministry of Education as a key focus for capacity building beginning in 2009/10:

1. **Setting goals**
2. **Aligning resources with priorities**
3. **Promoting collaborative learning cultures**
4. **Using data**
5. **Engaging in courageous conversations.**

While all of the leadership capacities identified in the Framework are important, and contribute to student achievement and well-being, the ministry has identified the five CLCs as key to making progress on the province's current educational goals. Thus, these five CLCs will be embedded in all provincially-sponsored professional learning and resources for school and system leaders beginning in the 2009/10 school year.

Ontario

BUILDING ON SUCCESS

Ontario's approach to system-wide improvement has yielded measurable results and attracted the attention of jurisdictions around the world.

As our knowledge continues to expand and evolve, leadership has emerged as a critically important factor necessary not only to sustain this improvement, but also to accelerate our progress toward the three core priorities set out in *Energizing Ontario Education*:

- High levels of student achievement
- Reduced gaps in student achievement
- Increased public confidence in publicly funded education.

Providing supports to help Ontario's educational leaders develop into the best possible instructional leaders continues to be a goal of the Ontario Leadership Strategy (OLS).

The Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) is an essential resource that school and system leaders have available to them to guide their individual leadership development. The Framework is an integral foundation of the OLS and provides leaders across the province with a clear roadmap to successful leadership. For the past two years school and system leaders across the province have been using the Framework as a resource to reflect on their practice and build their expertise in a wide range of leadership capacities.

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

According to Richard Elmore (2007), the condition necessary for successful school leadership is the leader's capacity to improve the quality of instructional practice.

The best possible instructional leadership cannot be accomplished simply by having a leadership framework of effective practices and competencies in place. Rather, there is a need to provide continuous guidance and support to help Ontario's educational leaders further develop and strengthen their practice, with a particular emphasis on the "deep instructional practices" that Elmore and others point to, as a focus for capacity building.

At the same time, research and practice have revealed increasingly that our approach to capacity building matters.

Capacity, argues Michael Fullan in *The Six Secrets of Change* (see *In Conversation*, Fall 2008), is more than knowledge and skills. It also involves using resources wisely, and committing to get important things done collectively and continuously. It is a combination of skills and knowledge, attitudes and actions taken together, and is focused on generating results.

While training, workshops and summer institutes are valuable to a point, says Fullan, they represent only part of the solution. No matter how well done – and even if they are team-based – these approaches are only input to capacity building.

In contrast to this "indirect" capacity building, Fullan stresses the importance of 'direct' capacity building which involves application, coaching, monitoring, exchanging ideas and strategies, assessment for learning, and other results-focused activities that take place in the leadership context.

SHARPENING OUR FOCUS

Based on these findings and drawing on the advice of research and education partners, the Ministry of Education has adopted the five Core Leadership Capacities as a ministry-wide focus to be embedded in all provincially-sponsored professional learning and resources for school and system leaders beginning in 2009/10.

This important new direction will ensure that capacity building activities associated with all ministry initiatives are aligned consistently around these five core capacities. Equally important, it will ensure that school leaders benefit from direct capacity building that is integrated into the day-to-day "business" of the ministry, boards and schools.
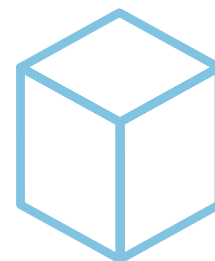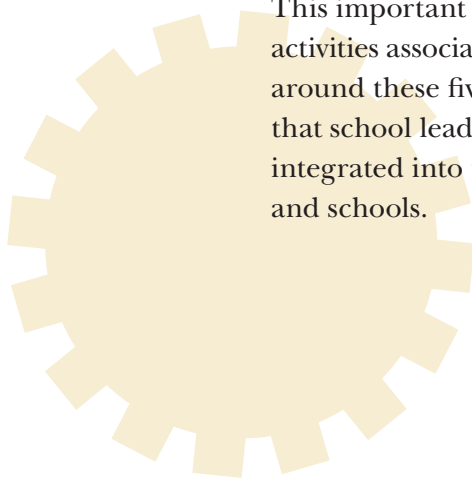
The Five Core Leadership Capacities

to help strengthen your leadership practice.

1. Setting Goals

This capacity refers to working with others to help ensure that goals are strategic, specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and time-bound (SMART) and lead to improved teaching and learning. For example:

- Develop and communicate a shared vision for the school that sets a context for goal-setting
- Lead groups to use evidence and inquiry to establish these goals, monitor progress and make adjustments to plans and/or practices
- Establish important linkages between individual goals, school improvement plans, and school board and provincial priorities.

2. Aligning Resources with Priorities

This capacity focuses on ensuring that financial, capital, human resources, curriculum and teaching resources, professional learning resources and program allocations are tied to priorities, with student achievement and well-being as the central, unambiguous focus. For example:

- Engage teachers, staff, the school board and the broader community to join in decisions related to resource allocation and share ownership for the results
- Collaborate with other schools and/or districts to learn about effective practices and to share resources wherever possible.

3. Promoting Collaborative Learning Cultures

This capacity is about enabling schools, school communities and districts to work together and learn from each other with a central focus on improved teaching quality and student achievement and well-being. For example:

- Facilitate a shared understanding and ownership of student achievement and well-being as a central focus for collaboration

among staff, federations, associations, the school board and the diverse school community
- Improve and build on existing models of professional learning communities
- Enable teamwork and collective decision-making among teachers and staff, providing opportunities for teacher-leadership
- Engage parents and the broader school community to be part of the learning culture.
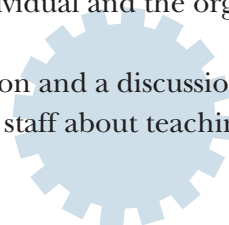
4. Using Data

This capacity is about leading and engaging school teams in gathering and analyzing provincial, district, school and classroom data to identify trends, strengths and weaknesses that will inform specific actions for improvement focused on teaching and learning. For example:

- Use data to inform school improvement plans
- Move beyond technical aspects of using data to address adaptive challenges such as gaining support for data use, managing emotional issues that may arise, and building staff confidence and sense of efficacy around the use of data
- Use data to foster a school culture in which staff:
  – have high expectations for student achievement
  – assess student performance and modify practice based on findings
  – take ownership for the results.

5. Engaging in Courageous Conversations

This capacity relates to challenging current practices and fostering innovation through conversation, to listen and to act on feedback, and to provide feedback that will lead to improvements in student achievement and well-being. For example:

- Build relational trust and establish a culture in which courageous conversations and feedback are seen as necessary for improvement
- Challenge assumptions at both the individual and the organizational level
- Integrate description, analysis, prediction and a discussion of the next level of work in every debrief with staff about teaching and learning.

A Call to Action

School and system leaders can expect to find a sustained emphasis on capacity building focused on the five CLCs beginning in 2009/10. All provincial leadership associations have endorsed these CLCs as a priority for the coming year and will continue to work with the ministry to reflect them in the professional learning they deliver. Boards are also encouraged to consider ways to support development in the areas of the five CLCs.

The work related to these capacities will strengthen and further align work that is already underway in the ministry, school boards and schools to build leadership competencies and practices. To support this work, *Ideas into Action* will be distributed on an occasional basis and will offer ideas and strategies drawn from current, credible research.

We hope this bulletin enriches your professional learning experience and provides a powerful springboard for putting ideas into action.

Learn more about the Ontario Leadership Strategy at www.ontario.ca/eduleadership
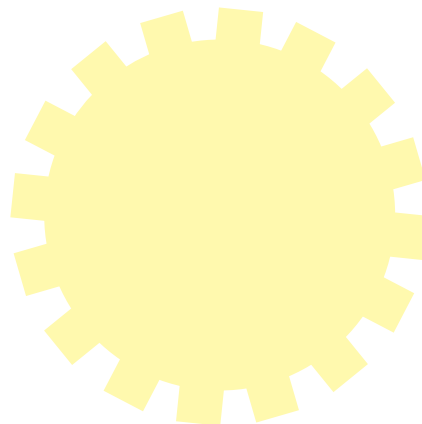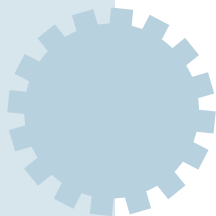
Making Connections: Five Core Capacities and the Leadership Framework

This chart illustrates the way in which the CLCs are embedded in the Ontario Leadership Framework

Core Leadership Capacity	Sample domains and related practices of the Ontario Leadership Framework		
1. Setting Goals	**Setting Directions**	**Leading the Instructional Program**	**Securing Accountability**
	Ensures the vision is clearly articulated, shared, understood and acted upon by all	Fosters a commitment to equity of outcome and to closing the achievement gap	Aligns school targets with board and provincial targets
2. Aligning Resources with Priorities	**Setting Directions**	**Leading the Instructional Program**	**Securing Accountability**
	Ensures creativity, innovation and the use of appropriate technologies to achieve excellence	Ensures that learning is at the centre of planning and resource management	Makes connections to ministry goals to strengthen commitment to school improvement efforts
3. Promoting Collaborative Learning Cultures	**Building Relationships and Developing People**	**Developing the Organization**	**Leading the Instructional Program**
	Acknowledges and celebrates the achievements of individuals and teams	Builds a collaborative learning culture within the school and actively engages with other schools to build effective learning communities	Builds a collaborative learning culture within the school and actively engages with other schools to build effective learning communities Develops professional learning communities to support school improvement
4. Using Data	**Setting Directions**	**Leading the Instructional Program**	**Securing Accountability**
	Works within the school community to translate the vision into agreed objectives and operational plans which promote and sustain school improvement	Ensures a consistent and continuous school-wide focus on student achievement, using system and school data to monitor progress	Develops and presents a coherent, understandable, accurate and transparent account of the school's performance to a range of audiences (e.g., ministry, board, parents, community)
5. Engaging in Courageous Conversations	**Building Relationships and Developing People**	**Developing the Organization**	**Securing Accountability**
	Encourages colleagues to take intellectual risks	Uses performance appraisal to foster professional growth, and challenges the thinking and learning of staff to further develop professional practice	Ensures individual staff accountabilities are clearly understood, agreed to and subject to rigorous review and evaluation

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