

What Is the Ontario Leadership Strategy?

Reach Every Student: Energizing Ontario Education, 2008 identified school leadership as a key supporting condition for achieving the province's core education priorities: high levels of student achievement, reduced gaps in student achievement, and increased public confidence in publicly funded education. To strengthen school leadership in Ontario, the Ministry of Education reviewed the research and consulted with education partners to create the Ontario Leadership Strategy (OLS). The OLS is a comprehensive plan of action designed to support student achievement and well-being through a coordinated and strategic approach to leadership development.

If we see an increase in the best practices and our case studies show that the practices work and student achievement is increasing over the long haul, time and again, then we can be confident about the difference that leadership practice is making. Leadership has made the difference in Ontario – it's undeniable – we can trace it, feel it, see it.

Michael Fullan at the Ontario Leadership Congress, April 2012

What Is the Theory of Action for the OLS?

The OLS holds that significant progress towards meeting the province's core education priorities can be accomplished by:

- supporting districts in developing, implementing, and measuring the impact of their leadership development strategies;
- inviting and facilitating the influence of partners to advance the goals of the OLS; and
- championing the development of initiatives that will enhance the coherence of leaders' work across the province.

The Goals of the OLS

- Attract the right people to leadership roles.
- Develop personal leadership resources in individuals and promote effective leadership practices in order to have the greatest possible impact on student achievement and well-being.
- Develop leadership capacity and coherence in organizations to strengthen their ability to deliver on education priorities.

The Ontario Leadership Framework 2012

The Ontario Leadership Framework, which describes what good leadership looks like, is the foundation for the OLS. To ensure that the framework is up to date with research evidence about leadership that makes a difference to student achievement and well-being, **Kenneth Leithwood, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE)/University of Toronto Professor Emeritus and Advisor on Leadership for the Ministry of Education**, conducted an extensive review of the latest research, including Ontario-specific data on district effectiveness. The findings of his study informed the revisions to the framework. The revised version, the Ontario Leadership Framework 2012, includes only those practices and personal leadership resources supported by robust evidence.

The **Institute for Education Leadership (IEL)** is leading the launch, distribution, and implementation of the Ontario Leadership Framework 2012.

What Are the Key Components of the OLS?

- Board Leadership Development Strategy
 - *encompasses mentoring, principal/vice-principal performance appraisal, succession planning and talent development, terms and conditions of employment of principals and vice-principals, and other district-led leadership activities*
- Supports for system leaders
 - *incorporates mentoring for system leaders, executive leadership programs, and orientation for newly appointed system leaders*
- Ontario Leadership Congress
- Minister's Principal Reference Group
- Supervisory officer performance appraisal (SOPA) pilot project
- Institute for Education Leadership
- Leadership publications
- Leading Student Achievement (in partnership with the Student Achievement Division)

Achievements to Date (2008–12)

- The **Ontario Leadership Framework** has been revised, as discussed above, to reflect the latest research on the personal leadership resources and leadership practices that impact student achievement and well-being through effective leadership by individuals and organizations.
- **Succession planning and talent development** have been recognized by districts as important responsibilities; funding and resources have been prioritized to support work in these areas.
- **Mentoring** has reached over 4000 newly appointed principals and vice-principals who benefited from the support of a trained mentor over a two-year period.
- **Principal/vice-principal performance appraisal**, which is focused on goals that promote student achievement and well-being, has been implemented province-wide, and a **supervisory officer performance appraisal** model is being piloted.
- **Terms and conditions of employment of principals and vice-principals** have been established across the province through the joint efforts of principals and districts.
- **Supports for system leaders** have ensured that newly appointed supervisory officers and directors of education have access to a trained mentor or coach through the support of their professional associations (360 mentees and 260 mentors to date), and system leaders have access to executive leadership programs (200 participants to date).
- **Leading Student Achievement** created a large network of principals focused on improving instructional leadership, reaching 2000 school and system leaders over the past seven years.
- The **Principal Congress**, held in 2009, 2010, and 2011, engaged 600 school leaders in sharing practices that support closing achievement gaps. A handbook, *Closing the Achievement Gap: Advice from Expert Ontario Principals*, was developed and shared across the province to put these practices into the hands of all principals.
- The **Ontario Leadership Congress**, held in 2012, engaged leadership teams from districts, school authorities, and provincial schools in discussions about building leadership that fosters a positive school climate and improves student achievement and well-being.
- **Leadership publications** – *Ideas into Action* (6 issues to date), *In Conversation* (9 issues to date), and *Principals Want to Know* (19 issues to date) – have engaged leaders on topical issues and shared research insights and practical strategies.
- The **Minister's Principal Reference Group** (64 principals and vice-principals in 52 districts over the past six years) has provided invaluable advice on numerous policy and program areas that contributed to successful implementation; this group continues to meet five times a year.

- The **Institute for Education Leadership (IEL)** commissioned research on succession planning and district effectiveness, sponsored the annual orientation for new supervisory officers, and promoted leadership development across the province.

APPLIKI, developed by the IEL, is a web-based clearinghouse through which Ontario districts can share resources and tools to support leadership development. Districts are encouraged to upload leadership products, plans and resources to APPLIKI and to explore how they might tailor the work of other districts for their own use. The IEL sponsors the **Ontario Education Leaders NING**, a professional network open to all Ontario leaders, who can use it to talk to one another and share leadership resources.

What's Next?

- Embedding the **OLF 2012** in all leadership development activities
- Collecting and analysing data about the implementation of the **supervisory officer performance appraisal (SOPA) pilot** to inform further development and gathering effective practices from districts involved in the pilot
- Initiating a research project on districts' strategies for building **parent engagement** to improve student achievement and well-being
- Supporting districts as they work to **monitor the impact of leadership development strategies** and select high-yield strategies
- Developing **resources**: for example, video clips that illustrate how leaders are using the personal leadership resources and practices to bring about improvements in student achievement in numeracy; an IEL project to provide professional learning supports for school and system leaders to implement a whole-school approach to positive school climate

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WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

- The Ministry of Education's Leadership Development website, at www.ontario.ca/eduleadership
- The Institute for Education Leadership website, at www.education-leadership-ontario.ca
- Your regional office
- The ministry's Leadership Development Branch, at 416-325-2623