School Level Leadership

" Leadership is the exercise of influence on organizational members and other stakeholders toward the identification and achievement of the organization's vision and goals"

LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

Setting Directions

Building a shared vision
- Establish, with staff, students and other stakeholders, an overall sense of purpose or vision for work in their schools to which they are all strongly committed
- Build understanding of the specific implications of the school's vision for its programs and the nature of classroom instruction
- Encourage the development of organizational norms that support openness to change in the direction of that purpose or vision
- Help staff and other stakeholders to understand the relationship between their school's vision and board and provincial policy initiatives and priorities

Identifying specific, shared, short-term goals
- Facilitate stakeholder engagement in processes for identifying specific school goals
- Ensure the goals are clearly communicated to all stakeholders
- Regularly encourage staff to evaluate their progress toward achieving school goals
- Encourage staff to develop and periodically review individual professional growth goals, as well as the relationship between their individual goals and the school's goals
- Make frequent explicit reference to (and use of) the school's goals when engaged in decisions about school programs and directions
- Build consensus among students, staff and other stakeholders for the school's goals and priorities

Creating high performance expectations
- Have high expectations for teachers, for students and for oneself
- Devote additional effort to creating high expectations among staff for the achievement of students who have traditionally struggled to be successful at school
- Encourage staff to be innovative in achieving those expectations
- Encourage staff to assume responsibility for achieving the school's vision and goals with all students
- Make one's expectations known through words and actions

Communicating the vision and goals
- Use many different formal and informal opportunities to explain the overall vision and goals established for the school to stakeholders
- Demonstrate to all stakeholders what the school's vision and goals mean in practice
- Regularly invite different stakeholder groups to describe how their work furthers the school's vision and goals

Building Relationships and Developing People

Providing support and demonstrating consideration for individual staff members
- Recognize individual staff member accomplishments
- Consider staff members' opinions when initiating actions that affect their work
- Build upon and respond to individual staff members' unique needs and expertise
- Treat individuals and groups equitably

Stimulating growth in the professional capacities of staff
- Encourage staff to reflect on what they are trying to achieve with students and how they are doing it
- Lead discussions about the relative merits of current and alternative practices
- Challenge staff to re-examine the extent to which their practices contribute to the learning of all of their students
- Facilitate opportunities for staff to learn from each other
- Suggest new ideas for staff learning
- Encourage staff to pursue their own goals for professional learning
- Encourage staff to develop and review their own professional growth goals and their relationship to school goals and priorities
- Encourage staff to try new practices consistent with their own interests and school goals

Modeling the school's values and practices
- Be highly visible in one's school
- Be easily accessible to staff, parents and students
- Have frequent, meaningful, interactions with teachers, students and parents that further the school goals
- Demonstrate the importance of continuous learning through visible engagement in one's own professional learning
- Exemplify, through one's own actions, the school's core values and its desired practices

Building trusting relationships with and among staff, student and parents
- Demonstrate competence when carrying out tasks
- Act in ways that consistently reflect the school's core values and priorities
- Demonstrate respect for staff, students and parents by listening to their ideas, being open to those ideas and genuinely considering their value
- Encourage staff, students and parents to listen to one another's ideas and genuinely consider their value
- Create norms in the school which value constructive debate about best practices
- Demonstrate respect, care and personal regard for students, staff and parents
- Encourage staff, students and parents to demonstrate respect, care and personal regard for one another

Establishing productive working relationships with teacher federation representatives
- Include federation representatives (along with staff more generally) in processes for establishing goals for school improvement
- Encourage federation representatives to keep their members well-informed about their work with school leaders
- Encourage federation representatives to collaborate in determining how to implement labor contract provisions so that they support school improvement work

Developing the Organization to Support Desired Practices

Building collaborative cultures and distributing leadership
- Model collaboration in the conduct of one's own work
- Nurture mutual respect and trust among those involved in collaborating
- Help develop the shared determination of group processes and outcomes
- Help develop clarity about goals and roles for collaboration
- Encourage a willingness to compromise among collaborators
- Foster open and fluent communication among collaborators
- Provide adequate and consistent resources to support collaborative work
- Involve staff in the design and implementation of important school decisions and policies
- Provide staff with leadership opportunities and support them as they take on these opportunities

Structuring the organization to facilitate collaboration
- Create timetables for teaching that maximize time on task for students
- Provide regular opportunities and structures to encourage and monitor teachers to work together on instructional improvement
- Establish team and group structures for problem solving
- Participate with staff in their collective instructional improvement work
- Distribute leadership for selected tasks
- Engage teachers in making decisions that affect their instructional work

Building productive relationships with families and communities
- Create a school environment in which parents are welcomed, respected and valued as partners in their children's learning
- Demonstrate leadership which parents trust (confident, systematic and attentive)
- Help develop staff commitment to engaging parents in the school
- Work, with staff, directly with diverse families to help them provide their children with supports in the home that will contribute to their success at schools
- Assist staff to better use the social and intellectual capital of students from diverse family backgrounds for instructional purposes in their classrooms
- Encourage staff to adopt a broad view of parent engagement that encourages more parents to be involved
- Help connect families to the wider network of social services they may need

Connecting the school to its wider environment
- Develop and maintain connections with other expert school and district leaders, those knowledgeable about policy and members of the educational research community

Maintaining a safe and healthy environment
- Secure the school's' physical facilities from unwanted intrusions and intruders
- Maintain the physical facility in a safe, healthy and attractive condition
- Communicate standards for non-violent behaviour and uphold those standards in an equitable manner
- Empower adults in the school to play a leadership role in promoting a positive school climate and model appropriate behaviour
- Implement and monitor the use of appropriate discipline practices not only in classrooms but in all other locations within the school
- Develop, with staff and students, processes to identify and resolve conflicts quickly and effectively
- Provide opportunities for staff and students to learn about effective conflict resolution strategies

Allocating resources in support of the school's vision and goals
- Enact efficient budgetary processes
- Secure sufficient resources of all types needed to carry out the instructional work of the school
- Provide sustained funding for the school's improvement priorities
- Distribute resources of all types in ways that are closely aligned with the school's improvement priorities:
- Revisit and realign the nature, amount and alignment of resources as priorities for school improvement change

Improving the Instructional Program

Staffing the instructional program
- Recruit and select teachers with the interest and capacity to further the school's efforts
- Retain skilled teachers by providing support and time for collaboration, sharing leadership, creating a shared vision for instruction and building trusting relationships

Providing instructional support
- Actively oversee the instructional program
- Coordinate what is taught across subjects and grades to avoid unnecessary overlap while providing needed reinforcement and extension of learning goals
- Observe in classrooms and provide constructive feedback that is useful to teachers
- Provide adequate preparation time for teachers
- Provide advice to teachers about how to solve classroom problems
- Engage teachers in observing effective instructional practices among colleagues in their own school as well as in other schools
- Participate with staff in their instructional improvement work

Monitoring student learning and school improvement progress
- Assist staff in understanding the importance of student assessment "for, of, and as learning"
- Collaborate with staff during the process of data interpretation
- Use multiple sources of evidence when diagnosing student progress
- Give priority to identifying students most in need of additional support
- Incorporate explicit data use in almost all decisions about student learning and school improvement
- Examine trends in student achievement over time (one or more years), rather than just at one point in time, when assessing student learning
- Collect and use data about the status of those classroom and school conditions serving as the focus of their school improvement efforts
- Provide conditions for teachers to use data effectively (time, support, partnerships with experts, data culture)

Buffering staff from distractions to their work
- Create and enforce consistent, school-wide discipline policies
- Minimize daily disruptions to classroom instructional time
- Implement a systematic procedure for deciding how best to respond to initiatives from outside the school
- Develop, with staff, guidelines to govern the amount of time teachers spend on non-instructional and out-of-school activities
- Regularly assess the contribution of all out-of-classroom activities to the learning priorities of students

Securing Accountability

Building staff members' sense of internal accountability
- Regularly engage staff in the analysis of evidence about the learning progress of all students
- Insist on the use of evidence that is of high quality (reliable, valid, using systematic collection processes, available in original form, subject to collaborative interpretation)
- Promote collective responsibility and accountability for student achievement and well-being
- Help staff make connections between school goals and ministry goals in order to strengthen commitment to school improvement efforts
- Assess one's own contributions to school achievements and take account of feedback from others
- Participate actively in one's own performance appraisal and make adjustments to better meet expectations and goals

Meeting the demands for external accountability
- Clearly define individual staff accountabilities in terms that are understood, agreed to and can be rigorously reviewed and evaluated
- Measure and monitor teacher and leader effectiveness using evidence about changes in student achievement
- Align school targets with board and provincial targets
- Provide an accurate and transparent account of the school's performance to all school stakeholders (e.g., ministry, board, parents, community)
- Create an organizational structure which reflects the school's values and enables management systems, structures and processes to work within legal requirements

Core Leadership Capacities are enacted across all five domains of the OLF

Setting Goals · Aligning Resources with Priorities · Promoting Collaborative Learning Cultures · Using Data · Engaging in Courageous Conversations · CLC

Personal Leadership Resources

Leaders draw upon the Personal Leadership Resources to effectively enact leadership practices

Cognitive Resources
- Problem solving expertise
- Knowledge of effective school and classroom conditions with direct effects on student learning

Social Resources
- Perceiving emotions
- Managing emotions
- Acting in emotionally appropriate ways

Psychological Resources
- Optimism
- Self- efficacy
- Resilience

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Definition of Leadership

For purposes of the *Ontario Leadership Framework* (OLF), leadership is defined as the exercise of influence on organizational members and other stakeholders toward the identification and achievement of the organization's vision and goals. This influence may have many sources (e.g. administrators, parents, teachers), is typically reciprocal rather than unidirectional, and is exercised through relationships between and among individuals, groups, and the settings in which they find themselves. Leadership, defined in this way, is "successful" to the extent that it makes significant, positive, and ethically defensible contributions to progress in achieving the organization's vision and goals.

For aspiring leaders, this framework provides important insights about what they will need to learn to be successful. Those already exercising leadership will find the framework a useful tool for self-reflection and self-assessment of leadership enacted in schools and school systems.

Background Development

The first iteration of the framework was released in draft form in 2005 and has been broadly used by Ontario education leaders to guide their practice and to provide leadership learning opportunities for leaders at all levels. In the five years that have elapsed, research about leadership and the practice of leadership have advanced. This revised version of the OLF represents an evolution of the framework to reflect these changes. The revised OLF reflects two distinct approaches to the description of successful leadership practice one focused on the work of individuals and small groups (*Successful Leadership Practices*), the other concerned with the effectiveness of the organization as a whole (*Successful Organizational Practices*), consistent with the claim that leadership is an "organizational property".

Placemat Version

The attached placemat version of the OLF represents one part of the overall framework, namely successful leadership practices for school leaders, encompassing both formal and informal leaders within schools. The placemat is provided as an "at-a-glance" view of the core leadership practices, their enactments, and the supporting "Personal Leadership Resources". To fully appreciate the evolution of the framework, the research base and rationale supporting the changes and approach, the longer research report should be read, discussed and debated for full understanding and implementation.

The placemat organizes the core leadership practices in the same five domains as the original OLF. Within each domain are the core leadership practices (bolded) followed by nuggeted lists that suggest how this practice is enacted by effective school leaders, according to the research. It is important to emphasize that even though the practices are organized into five domains and shown in columns on the placemat, this does not reflect the way that school leaders actually enact leadership. They draw upon practices from different domains simultaneously in an integrated way. The columns should be seen as permeable and fluid.

Beneath the five domains, the Personal Leadership Resources are listed, in brief. While many traits or personal characteristics have been associated with leaders and leadership, the OLF includes only those for which there is compelling empirical evidence indicating they are instrumental to leadership success. Referred to in the OLF as "personal resources", they are of three types: cognitive, social and psychological. More detail on these is included in the research report. These resources are applied by effective school leaders as needed across the five domains of framework.

Core Leadership Capacities

Also shown on the placemat in the lower right corner are the current five Core Leadership Practices. The identification of these five core leadership capacities was helpful in focusing and aligning leadership work and they found resonance with leaders across the province. Evidence of the CLCs is found in various domains of the OLF and just as with the original OLF, the CLCs tend to work across domains rather than residing within a single domain.

As an example of the cross domain enactment of the CLCs, *Setting Goals* is found throughout the domain, *Setting Directions* but also in the *Building Relationships and Developing People* domain in the practice, "modeling the school's values and goals", and in the domain *Developing the Organization to Support Desired Practices* in the practices, "help develop the shared determination of group processes and outcomes" and "help develop clarity about goals and roles for collaboration".

Gaps in leadership capacity identified through OLS pilot programs like principal appraisal and mentoring led to the identification of the first five CLCs. As these gaps are filled or changed, the CLCs may contract or expand in respond to needs.

Important Changes

The revised framework when mapped out in this column format looks quite similar to the previous framework and in many ways it is. However, there are important changes which will become evident as one reads the documents carefully. For example:

- There is a greater focus on equity and inclusion which is woven throughout the research report and the specific practices;
- There is a more explicit reference to the role of parents and community and how leaders can work effectively with these groups;
- There is specific reference to the practice of establishing productive working relationships with teacher federation representatives;
- Maintaining a safe and healthy environment is described in more detail.

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