ONTARIO LEADERSHIP STRATEGY

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Ideas Into Action is published by the Ministry of Education to support Ontario's school and district leaders. It is designed to provide research insights and practical strategies for school and system leaders that are aligned with both the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) and the broader Ontario Leadership Strategy (OLS). Ministry-sponsored professional learning and resources are focused on five Core Leadership Capacities (CLCs) derived from the *Ontario Leadership Framework*: setting goals, aligning resources with priorities, promoting collaborative learning cultures, using data, and engaging in courageous conversations.

Ideas Into Action is likewise currently devoted to exploring these five CLCs as one of many supports being provided to assist leaders in further strengthening and integrating these capacities into their daily practice. Each issue focuses on one of the CLCs and shows how it is derived from the OLF, which describes the full range of capacities leaders use to meet their specific challenges and leadership goals.

You will find more information about Leadership Development on the ministry website and on the website of the Institute of Education Leadership (IEL) at www.education-leadership-ontario.ca/. If you have any comments or suggestions, please contact us at: ldb-ddl@ontario.ca
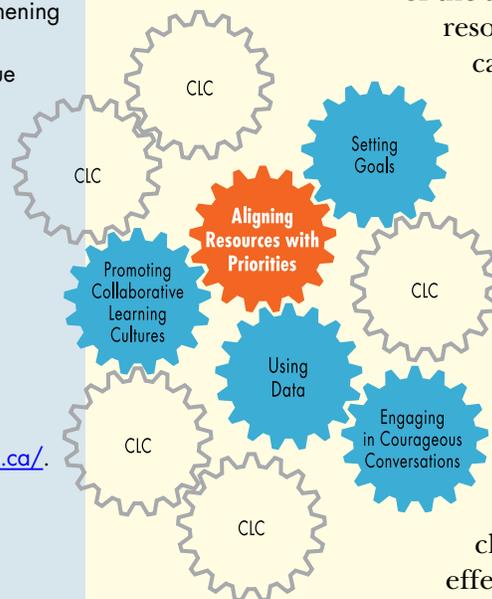
Exploring Five Core Leadership Capacities

Aligning Resources with Priorities: Focusing on What Matters Most

Time. Money. People. Materials. Equipment. Physical Facilities. Knowledge and Skill. The one thing all of our improvement plans and leadership strategies have in common – from the simplest to the most complex – is that we need resources to implement them.

More to the point, resources are limited. So the question of how to use our resources as effectively, purposefully, and efficiently as possible is a key strategic leadership question.

In this issue of *Ideas Into Action* we explore a sampling of the available research evidence for aligning resources with priorities as a core leadership capacity. Additionally, we uncover how enacting leadership practices related to this capacity can support student achievement and well-being and increase public confidence in public education.

We also consider some of the current thinking of researchers and practitioners on how to allocate resources more deliberately and productively to achieve our student achievement and improvement goals including how to address common challenges associated with using resources effectively.

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reach every student

Ontario

The Case for Aligning Resources with Priorities: Some Research Perspectives

We would probably all agree with Grubb (2009) that the "money myth" – the idea that you can solve problems by throwing money at them and, conversely, that solving problems is impossible without more funding – is misguided and simplistic. Grubb argues, in fact, that there is little evidence to support a direct connection between more spending and improved outcomes, such as higher test scores, lower dropout rates and reduced achievement gaps.

Money does matter, of course. Schools need teachers, learning resources and facilities, all of which require money, especially as we put strategies in place to help ensure success for all students.

In order to make the best use of money, Miles and Frank (2008) suggest that we adjust our focus from what money can buy to how we can use resources purposefully to support student learning. Their research, conducted over the past two decades, examined the use of resources in thousands of schools. They concluded that good stewardship of public resources – an ethic that embodies responsible planning and management – is a foundation for high-performing schools. It matters very much how resources are used. Their search for patterns reveals that high performing schools, even across very diverse educational contexts, consistently use carefully considered strategies to allocate resources.

Levačić (2010) shifts the conversation from what constitutes resources to the purpose of educational resource management. In her view the primary goal of resource allocation is to maximize student learning within given resource constraints. She draws on current research evidence to support the claim that educational leaders in this era of accountability need to:

- develop and rely on their own and their staff's professional judgements, and do so based on evidence
- evaluate, to the extent possible, the consequences for student learning of their schools' decisions about resource allocation, and
- thereby develop an evidence base for their own practice on the outcomes of particular uses of resources.

Levačić's key message to education leaders is that school budgeting needs to be fully integrated with teaching and learning.

First Things First:
What Do We Mean by "Resources?"

In arguing the need to adjust our leadership lens and think of "resources" rather than "money," Miles and Frank (2008) advise that we focus first on people, second on time and third on dollars. We need to use all three strategically to support student learning goals.

Levačić (2010) expands on this view suggesting that it is useful to distinguish between "real" and "monetary" resources. Real resources, she says, are the actual inputs into the educational process – people and material resources. People, of course, include both teaching and non-teaching staff. Material resources include those used directly in learning, and those required to sustain the physical environment in which teaching and learning take place. Monetary resources, on the other hand, are the purchasing power we are given, and that we ultimately convert into real resources.

Grubb (2009) draws on a large body of research to further broaden the meaning of "resources." He offers these four categories to distinguish among school resources:

- **Simple resources** refer to expenditure per pupil and include the student/teacher ratio and teacher salary levels. Simple resources by themselves are unlikely to bring about the improvements that are sought; for example, introducing new curriculum requires professional learning supports to enable educators to take full advantage of the resource.
- **Compound resources** are those where two or more resources are jointly required; for example, the need for teachers who are experienced in a particular school *and* knowledgeable about that school and community, or teachers with credentials *and* teaching experience in a particular subject area.
- **Complex resources** are those that can't be bought, but must be created by teachers and education leaders over time; for example, bringing about authentic shared leadership.
- **Abstract resources** are more difficult to identify and measure. Their relationship to funding is complex. These resources are often embedded in a web of relationships and practices in schools and systems. One example of this category is "relational trust" identified by Bryk and Schneider (2002) as an essential resource for school improvement.

While there is some variation across these views of what constitutes "resources" – from the very concrete to the abstract – these researchers agree we need to think beyond money when considering the key resources that can positively influence student achievement and well-being.

Schools and districts often ignore a range of abstract resources, including:

- school climate; e.g., relationships needed to make a school dedicated to academic improvement
- student commitment and trust
- equilibrium among the views of students and those of teachers and education leaders
- coherence of the curriculum; i.e., developed from a compatible set of assumptions about education
- institutional influences
- the stability of the students, teachers, administrators, and policies.

– Grubb 2009

Bryk and Schneider (2002) name "trust" as a "core resource for improvement." In their study of elementary schools engaged in reform, they found that schools that were improving on "relational trust" which they characterized as respect, competence, personal regard for others and integrity, had more significant improvements in student achievement than schools that were not improving on relational trust.

Effective Resource Alignment: What Does It Look Like?

It is leadership-driven

According to Levačić (2010), effective resource alignment is inextricably linked with successful leadership, and with the effective management of teaching and learning. Robinson, Hohepa and Lloyd (2009) whose research illuminates the complex relationship between educational leadership and student achievement echo this view. They argue further that this is not an "ad hoc process," but rather, "a process guided by clear goals and purposes." These purposes help to shape the criteria used to make resource allocation decisions. They found that when identifying and obtaining resources, leaders in high-performing schools:

- use clear criteria that are aligned to pedagogical and philosophical purposes
- ensure that there is sustained funding for pedagogical priorities.

For Miles and Frank (2008), aligning resources with priorities involves three distinct functions:

1. Clearly defining what the school intends to accomplish
2. Developing an instructional model appropriate to that goal
3. Organizing resources in a way that supports the instructional model.

In addition, they argue that while schools can and do organize resources in a variety of ways, high-performing schools organize people, time and money against three key resource allocation strategies:

1. Investing continuously in improving teaching quality through hiring, professional development, job structure and common planning time
2. Creating opportunities for individual attention and personal learning environments
3. Maximizing academic time and linking that time to student learning.

It is strategic and supports efficiency of operations

Shields and Miles (2008) provide a detailed model of resource allocation based on their study of how urban high schools organize people, time and money. In their research they identified "leading edge schools" that outperform other schools in their local districts. While differing in the specific ways they use resources, these schools share a set of identifiable practices:

- They create "strategic designs" that revolve around two distinct practices:
  1. Defining a clear instructional model designed to fulfill the school's learning goals and reflect the student population

2. Organizing people, time and money to support this instructional model by investing in teaching quality, using student time strategically, and creating individual attention for students.

- These schools are priority-focused. They make trade-offs to invest in the most important priorities when faced with limits on the amount, type and use of people, time and money.
- They are flexible and adapt their strategies in response to lessons learned and changing student needs and conditions.

For Levin and Naylor (2007) aligning resources with priorities inevitably involves reallocation from existing, lower-yield purposes to new, higher-yield activities. This, they acknowledge, is never an easy task. Their proposed approach to thinking about resource allocation is guided by three key principles:

- Use evidence about the drivers of educational outcomes which include family background, skills and knowledge of educators and allocation of students to classes and time to subjects
- Choose prevention over remediation; for example, provide early interventions
- Support efficiency and cost-effective practices in operation; for example, reduce failure, improve retention and student motivation.

It is integrated

In Bray's (2004) report on a large scale study of resource allocation, "improvement districts" put a range of strategies in place to boost their students' achievement, and then actively reallocated resources to support those efforts. Creative and responsive to school-level need, these districts used clear goals to allocate funding, staff, time, parent and community and physical resources. Researchers noted a pervasive mind-set that staff members are a resource that can be reallocated to meet priorities.

One shortcoming of the resource allocation practices observed during this work was the absence of fiscal and other resource allocation as an integral part of school and system improvement processes. District leaders acknowledged that they lack the capacity to investigate, much less track over time, how their use of resources directly affects student performance.

Researchers concluded that a more systematic approach or a common frame of reference would provide help in rethinking how resources should be allocated. In this approach school and system leaders, teachers and parents would have a role to play in identifying their highest priorities and have the opportunity to make a case for allocating resources in support of those priorities.

A systematic approach connects the allocation of resources with student performance goals. It starts with an overall framework and includes professional learning supports and ongoing help so that many more people in the system can:
- use student data for planning
- focus spending on identified needs and priorities
- develop leadership and decision-making structures that support goals
- evaluate improvement efforts credibly
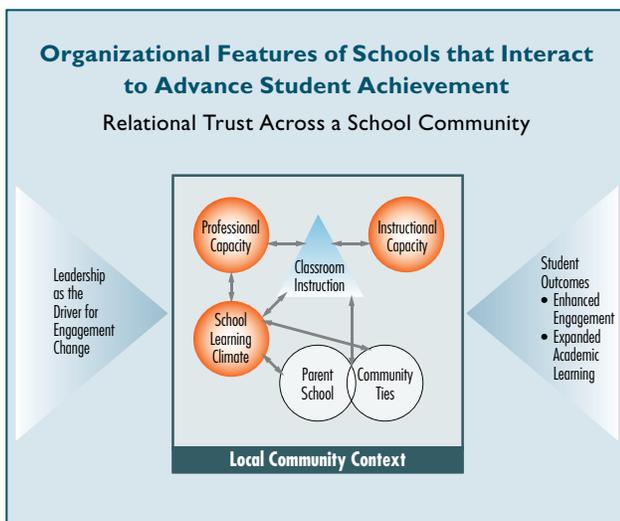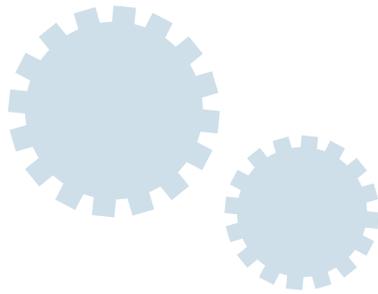- communicate effectively with peers about what works.

– Bray 2004

It is purposeful

Another important window into effectively focusing resources is provided by Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, and Easton (2010) whose research into how schools are organized and how schools interact with the community can make the difference. Their research identified the following interrelated organizational features of schools that are essential to advancing student achievement and engagement:

1. **A coherent instructional guidance system:** These schools have instructional systems in place that articulate the "what" and "how" of instruction, and clearly set out both the learning tasks given to students and the assessments that will inform ongoing instruction.

2. **Professional capacity:** This feature encompasses the quality of teaching staff, the professional development that supports their learning and the social resources within a staff that enable them to work together and solve problems.

3. **Strong ties between parents, the community and the school:** Having strong ties in place between school professionals and the parents and community they serve is essential. The quality of these ties links directly to students' motivation and school participation and can provide critically important resources for the classroom.

4. **A student-centred learning climate:** All of the adults in the school community foster a climate in which students think of themselves as learners. This means creating a safe and welcoming environment as an essential prerequisite for learning. This also means promoting ambitious academic work for students – along with support for each student – so that students believe in themselves, persist and achieve.

5. **Leadership that drives change:** Principals engage in and balance both instructional and collaborative leadership. This includes, on the instructional side, establishing strategic priorities for using resources and, on the collaborative side, fostering positive relationships across the school community to cultivate leadership among teachers, parents and community members.

Organizational Features of Schools that Interact to Advance Student Achievement

Relational Trust Across a School Community

Leadership as the Driver for Engagement Change

Professional Capacity
Instructional Capacity
Classroom Instruction
School Learning Climate
Parent School
Community Ties

Student Outcomes
• Enhanced Engagement
• Expanded Academic Learning

Local Community Context

Source: Bryk et al 2010

No one individual support has significance over another. On the contrary, the five supports including the way in which resources are aligned with strategic priorities amount to an "organized system of elements." Their primary value lies in their integration and mutual reinforcement.

Strategies for Success: Overcoming Key Challenges

In practice, leadership is always a matter of balancing competing demands, interests, ideas and approaches. Researchers argue that the right answer to the challenges related to aligning resources with priorities is rarely clear, and may change from time to time, and from place to place.

Developing an effective approach to resource allocation is vital. It involves acknowledging and then finding solutions to the following key challenges which research and professional practice tell us are commonly encountered by leaders: establishing focus, staying on track and making optimal use of available funds.

Challenge #1: Establishing Focus

Set no more than six priorities

Reeves (2011) argues that focus is a necessity given that leaders are faced with an avalanche of competing demands that make it difficult to concentrate in a disciplined way. Based on an analysis of leadership in more than 2,000 schools, his findings show that schools begin to lose their ability to focus when leaders identify more than six priority initiatives.

Reeves advises school leaders to:

- Identify a maximum of six priority instructional initiatives that are clearly linked to student needs.
- Work from – and develop among staff – a sense of efficacy, based on the conviction that the actions of school leaders and teachers are the primary influences on students' academic success.
- Observe and record the specific actions being taken by teachers and leaders in the school to move these initiatives forward and improve student achievement.

Reeves stresses the importance of this sense of efficacy, citing four decades of research that shows a significant link between the beliefs of teachers and school leaders about their own efficacy and student performance.

Build and maintain a positive learning climate

Research carried out by Hattie (2009) examined the effects of school leadership. It shows convincingly that effective school leaders consistently focus on: creating a learning climate free of disruption, a system of clear teaching objectives, and high expectations for teachers and students. In Hattie's research school leaders who promote challenging goals, and then establish safe environments for teachers to critique, question and support their colleagues, have the greatest effect on student outcomes.

Organize for instructional improvement

The work of Horng and Loeb (2010) suggests that leaders should "think differently" about how to fulfil their role as instructional leaders. Instead of following the tradition that has characterized successful instructional leaders as "hands-on" leaders, "engaged with curriculum and instruction issues, unafraid to work directly with teachers, and often present in classrooms," they present a broader conception of instructional leadership.

School leaders, they say, exert a tremendous effect on student learning through organizational management – the teachers they hire, how they assign those teachers to classrooms, how they retain teachers and how they create opportunities for teachers to improve.

Support for Horng and Loeb's conception about how school leaders influence teaching and learning can also be found in the Wallace Foundation's six-year study of school leadership (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom and Anderson, 2010). This research shows that school leaders primarily affect student learning by influencing teachers' motivations and working conditions. This study suggests that, by comparison, leaders' influence on teachers' knowledge and skills has far less effect on student learning. The authors therefore caution against conceiving of "instructional leadership" as leadership solely focused on classroom instruction.

Build capacity to put priorities first

Wagner, Kegan, Lahey, Lemons, Garnier, Helsing, Howell, Thurber and Rasmussen (2006) present an important perspective on what leaders need to do in order to improve their capacity to focus. Most leaders, they say, understand the importance of choosing a priority and focusing on it relentlessly, but very often fail to do so. "So, why don't they?" is a question these researchers address.

In their work, Wagner et al describe leaders who are "dancing as fast as they can" and putting enormous effort into sound initiatives that make sense. But in most cases, they say, no significant progress is being made. Furthermore, it becomes increasingly difficult to enlist people's energies in future efforts. "Look how hard we tried last time and we still didn't get anywhere. So what's the use?" goes the logic, they say.

"Trying harder" may be an effective approach to technical challenges. However, for adaptive challenges these researchers suggest we need to "move to the balcony, away from the dance floor" and look at the underlying factors that are preventing us from doing the "relentless focusing" we know we need to do. They suggest that leaders need to discover and explore the personal assumptions that are causing them to over-initiate and lose focus. Likewise, they need to give explicit messages to teachers about what they can let go of, or loosen up on, so that teachers are in turn empowered to focus on priorities.

Challenge #2: Staying on Track

Set meaningful benchmarks

Hattie (2009) demonstrates through his compelling research that the "claim that an initiative 'works' is unpersuasive because a comparison with 'no impact at all' is a bar set so low that all initiatives appear worthwhile." In fact, the vast majority of initiatives do produce some small gain. "Impact worthy of leadership focus," he argues "is one that requires evidence that the proposed initiative can effect a significantly greater gain over current practice."

Because 95 percent of interventions result in some gain in achievement, Hattie concludes that the "criterion of impact" must be "more than 'better than nothing.' It must surpass a benchmark of real-world change."

Marzano (2011/2012) adds an important perspective to Hattie's convincing findings, which is the proviso that "a strategy is just a tool." It's "how you use the strategy" that is key – the effect on student learning will be dependent on the extent to which the strategy is effectively put into practice.

Expect the unexpected

No organization can do everything at once at a high level. We must identify and focus unremittingly on a small number of high-profile priorities. Surprise is an inevitable part of the work of school improvement. Many plans, even well-made ones, are thrown off track – or abandoned entirely – in the face of completely unexpected developments. In effect, the truly important is often driven out by the urgent.

While there are no easy solutions to this challenge, it is important that leaders recognize they will always have more things to do than they have time for. Distractions are inevitable but have to be managed to minimize their negative impact.

One key distinction, frequently referenced, is that there are two types of things a leader can spend time on:

1. Those necessary to the success of the organization that only the leader can do
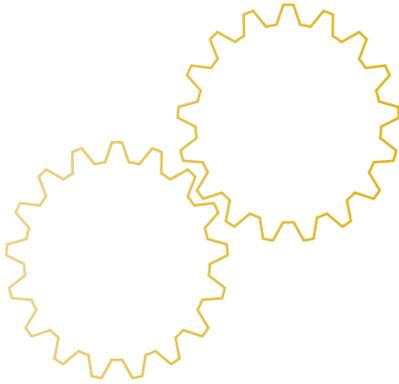2. Everything else.

The challenge, then, is to maintain focus on the first of these, and avoid allowing the situation to reverse itself – as it often does – so that the leader is focused on the "everything else" and loses sight of the truly critical.

However, it is possible for leaders to get closer to an optimal use of time with these suggestion that experts offer:

- Accept the reality that surprises will occur.
- Determine the few critical things that must happen for your organization to succeed and only you can do.
- Build these most important things into your schedule and protect them so they are more likely to bind you.
- Make your commitments public; tell others you have scheduled them.
- Hold fewer and shorter meetings. Eliminate discussion of things that can be communicated on paper or through e-mail and focus meetings on things that require discussion.
- Delegate work to others and trust them to do it.
- Avoid deferring entirely to the demands of the larger organization.

Deal with distraction

In *Change Leader*, Michael Fullan (2011a) identifies what he calls the "disease of distraction." It is easy, he suggests, to become overloaded, confused and misdirected by too much information. While we must be skilful at deciding what to do, it is equally important that we develop the ability to decide what not to do.

Fullan argues in favour of the "humble checklist" citing Gawande's *The Checklist Manifesto* (2009), which describes good checklists as "simple, measurable, and transmissible." An effective checklist says Gawande is "precise, efficient, to the point and easy to use, even in the most difficult and distracting situations."

For example, Fullan (2011a) offers the following sample checklist for change leaders:

- Do I have a small number of core priorities?
- What am I doing to communicate with organization members both initially and especially on an ongoing basis?
- Have I stopped to see if I am practicing "impressive empathy" in relation to potential naysayers?
- Have I spelled out the norm of speaking up when there are persistent problems and provided opportunities for people to identify problems?
- Are we gathering data that are simple, ongoing, and used for quick feedback on how well things are going? Are our data helping us focus or are we drowning in it?
- Have I specified when the team needs to meet periodically to discuss progress and problem solve? In the past six months, have I stopped to acknowledge mistakes publicly, and to learn from them?
- Do I regularly practice reflective techniques to get to know my inner self?

"Impressive empathy" is the ability to understand others who disagree with you.

– Fullan 2011a

Embrace "positive interruptions"

Cathy Davidson (2011, 2012) offers an alternative – and somewhat provocative – perspective on how to deal with distraction, which may apply to at least some leaders. "Instead of battling distraction" she suggests that we "embrace our brain's proclivity for it." Research she says shows that 21st Century knowledge workers "switch tasks an average of once every three minutes. Forty-four percent of the switches are caused by 'internal' rather than 'external' sources of distraction – meaning our minds simply wander." Once focus has been interrupted, it takes an average of 25 minutes to return to it.

With this research in mind, Davidson counters the view that we should try to eliminate distractions. She believes that "today's leaders are capable of coping with and sometimes even thriving on them." Her argument is that "because our brains are built to multitask" we should "unlearn" the skill of making undivided attention an ideal. Why? "Because not everyone has the same style requirements for attention."

She cites research that shows that "accident, disruption, distraction, and difference increase our motivation to learn and solve problems, both individually and collectively. The key is to embrace and even create positive interruptions."

Keep it simple

In contrast to Davidson's perspective, Jim Collins (2001), in his book *Good to Great*, reveres simplicity and offers it as the answer to putting first things first and staying on track. "The real path to greatness [and excellence]" he says, "requires simplicity and diligence. It requires clarity, not instant illumination. It demands each of us to focus on what is vital – and to eliminate all of the extraneous distractions."

That's why, as many know, he reveres hedgehogs, which do one thing well – roll into a ball to protect themselves – as opposed to foxes, which plan and plot and scheme as they "pursue many ends at the same time." Foxes aren't simple. They are "scattered and diffused, moving on many levels." That's why they fail. By contrast, hedgehogs with their simple, singular focus succeed because they commit entirely and exclusively to "what is essential and ignore the rest."

Practice selective abandonment

Lovely (2006) agrees with Collins and suggests that leaders need to have a framework in place that helps them identify what is essential, before they can effectively decide what to let go of – a process she calls "selective abandonment." Selective abandonment involves eliminating things that don't bring enough value to the implementation of key priorities. She offers a "making room for essentials" checklist of "quality screening indicators" as a means of assessing which activities

or projects are worth retaining. Ask yourself if the program, service or activity

- has evidence or data to indicate it directly contributes to increased academic performance for all students?
- aligns with the school district mission and goals?
- is research-based?
- has an evaluation process? If not, can one be developed?
- results in outcomes and contributions that justify the amount of resources required?

In practicing "selective abandonment" of course, we would do well to avoid prematurely abandoning strategies that may take time to become established and produce results.

Challenge #3: Making Optimal Use of Available Resources

Strengthen strategic financial and human resource management skills

In *Improving School Leadership, Volume 1: Policy and Practice,* a study commissioned by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Pont, Nusche, and Moorman (2008) identify "strategic financial and human resource management" as one of four major domains of responsibility essential for school leadership to improve student outcomes. The argument made is that "effective planning and management of resources can improve school outcomes by strategically aligning resources with pedagogical purposes."

The authors point out that the challenge in fulfilling this responsibility is that almost all principals or aspiring leaders have a background as teachers. They suggest that "when principals take up their position they may not necessarily be competent as pedagogical leaders and they often lack knowledge in personnel and financial management and the skills for working beyond the school borders – the leadership tasks required for schools of the 21st Century." It is therefore important to ensure that school leaders are equipped to make strategic use of resources.

Dodd's (2006) research puts this view into perspective arguing that a school can manage its budget to high accounting standards, while failing to move learning forward. He argues that the allocation of resources for educational purposes is crucial rather than expertise in financial management. This is not to say that competence in financial management is not essential to effective resource allocation. On the contrary, the majority of the sample schools in Dodd's study appear to be competently managed in terms of finance, and some appear very well managed. And in fact, a lack of expertise in managing finances

led Dodd to conclude that greater investment in the experience and expertise of the staff related to resource allocation will lead to improvements in financial and resource management and control.

This view finds support in 'Instructional Leadership vs. Instructional Management,' (Ontario Principal Council's Professional Services Team, 2011). The authors suggest that "an effective instructional leader needs to have well-developed management skills in order to lead effectively…an instructional leader is accountable for the expenditure of public and non-public funds, not only those allocated for the improvement of student achievement but also for all of the expenditures under her jurisdiction."

For this reason, the writers argue that while a school leader is not expected to be a chartered accountant, "the onus is on the administrator to be an effective financial manager." They identify the following fundamental requirements of school leaders:

- a knowledge of, and strict adherence to, the financial policies and procedures of the district school board
- meaningful supervision of staff to whom responsibility for financial management is delegated.

Work from a clear strategy

Rumelt (2011b) draws a distinction between good and bad strategy. For him some hallmarks of bad strategy include:

- **Failure to face the problem:** If you fail to identify and analyze the obstacles, you don't have a strategy.
- **Mistaking goals for strategy:** The job of the leader is to create the conditions to have a strategy worthy of the effort required.
- **Bad strategic objectives:** good strategy works by focusing energy and resources on one, or a very few, pivotal objectives.
- **Superficial abstraction:** Rumelt says this is designed to mask the absence of thought and refers to it as "fluff."

Bad strategy, Rumelt says, has many common roots. Two of these are the inability to choose and "template-style planning" which he describes as filling in the blanks with "vision, mission, values, and strategies." Rumelt offers the following structure as a foundation for crafting good strategies:

1. **A diagnosis:** an explanation of the nature of the challenge. A good diagnosis simplifies the often overwhelming complexity of reality by identifying certain aspects of the situation as being the critical ones.
2. **A guiding policy:** an overall approach chosen to cope with or overcome the obstacles identified in the diagnosis.
3. **Coherent actions:** steps that are coordinated with one another to support the accomplishment of the guiding policy.

# District Leadership: Implications for Effective Practice

Effective resource allocation at the school level depends on similarly coherent strategies at the district level. In fact there is strong consensus among researchers and practitioners alike that if the senior leaders in a system do not "walk the talk" by effectively aligning resources with priorities at a district level, they cannot expect this alignment to happen in schools. The following section draws on a sampling of current research findings to suggest essential actions systems must take to make successful resource allocation possible at the school level.

Adopt resource alignment as a key district focus

Marzano and Waters (2009) offer an evidence-based perspective that illustrates how aligning resources with priorities is one of five important actions that districts must take to bring about improved teaching and learning. Their meta-analysis – which included determining the specific district leadership behaviours associated with student achievement – identified the following five specific actions:

1. Ensure collaborative goal setting
2. Establish non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction
3. Create board alignment with and support of district goals
4. Monitor achievement and instruction goals
5. Allocate resources to support goals for achievement and instruction.

According to these researchers, resource alignment – along with collaborative goal setting and district alignment – is a necessary foundation for reaching non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction. They argue further that the necessary resources including time, money, personnel and materials, must be allocated to accomplish the district's goals and can mean "cutting back on or dropping initiatives that are not aligned with district goals for achievement and instruction."
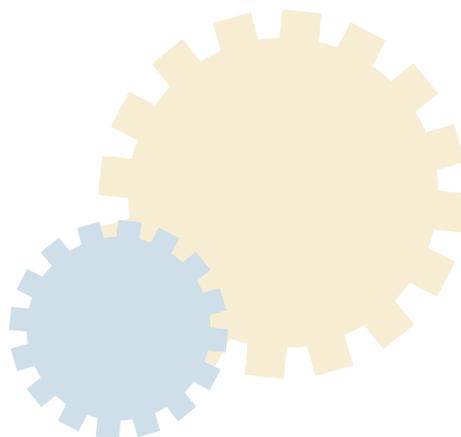
Define and support a clear success trajectory

Effective resource alignment with priorities must be embedded in an overall strategy for school and system improvement. To illustrate this notion for improvement in high school settings, researchers suggest that implementation plans should include the following interrelated and interdependent dimensions:

- a strong focus on a few clear priorities throughout the organization
- a widely understood and accepted plan
- infrastructure and resources focused on the priorities
- systems, structures, and processes to support the plan
- the capacity to deal with resistance
- monitoring measures of progress
- extensive two-way communication.

The first and most important requirement for effective implementation is sustained attention. This sense of focus and attention, he argues, must start at the top of the organization. What does a clear district focus look like? The following presents a clear picture of such a focus in the following:

- Key priorities permeate everything the organization does.
- Priorities are the main focus of all internal and external communication so that everyone recognizes and understands them.
- People throughout the organization can see their role in achieving these goals. There are clear metrics for progress. The key issues get first priority on the organization's budget so that they are resourced adequately.
- Priority goals are the main subject of discussion on every important agenda, from board meetings to staff meetings, so that they are constantly on people's "radar."
- Priorities are the central preoccupation of the organization's leadership group, even though there may be a key person with the greatest responsibility for each priority.
- Data are collected and analyzed so that there is constant monitoring of progress and adjustment of plans in light of new developments.
- The organization manages other issues and pressures so that they do not distract from the main goals.

Key priorities must be supported not only by clear responsibilities, but equally by an appropriate infrastructure. Thus, the creation of a supportive infrastructure is a critically important way that organizations mobilize their resources to achieve priority goals.

Pursue true district-wide coherence

The Public Education Leadership Project (PELP) provides a powerful example of the interrelatedness and interdependence of key dimensions of a district-wide framework for improvement (Childress, Elmore and Grossman, 2006). The PELP framework grew out of the belief that school-based solutions to student improvement, while important, aren't enough.

For the PELP team, achieving improvement on a broad scale required a district-wide strategy for improving classroom instruction and an organization capable of implementing it. In response they developed the following framework, one that clearly identifies and organizes a series of key elements including alignment of resources with priorities that together support district-wide improvement.

Elements of the PELP Framework

The PELP framework operates from the inside-out, prioritizing the teaching and learning that happens at the instructional core as the most important work in a school or district.
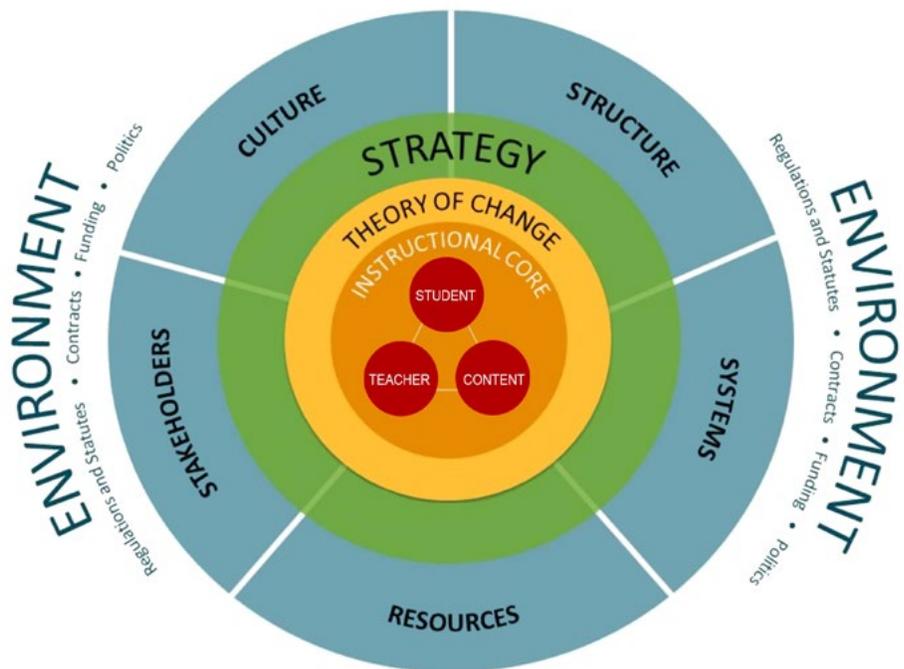
- **Instructional Core:** The core includes three interdependent components: teachers' knowledge and skill, students' engagement in their own learning, and academically challenging content.

- **Theory of Change:** The organization's belief about the relationships between certain actions and desired outcomes, often phrased as an "if… then…" statement. This theory links the mission of increased performance for all students to the strategy the organization will use to achieve that goal.

- **Strategy:** A coherent set of actions a district deliberately undertakes to strengthen the instructional core with the objective of raising student performance district-wide. Gaining coherence among actions at the district, school, and classroom levels will make a district's chosen strategy more scalable and sustainable.

- **Stakeholders:** The people and groups inside and outside of the district – district and school staff, governing bodies, unions and associations, parents and parent organizations, civic and community leaders and organizations.

- **Culture:** The predominant norms, values, and attitudes that define and drive behaviour in the district.
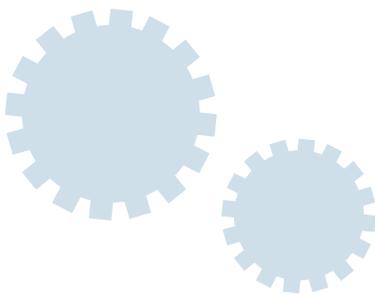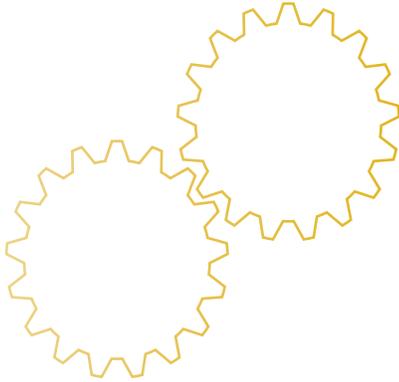
- **Structure:** Structures help define how the work of the district gets done. It includes how people are organized, who has responsibility and accountability for results, and who makes or influences decisions.

- **Systems:** School districts manage themselves through a variety of systems, which are the processes and procedures through which work gets done. Systems are built around such important functions as career development and promotion, compensation, student assignment, resource allocation, organizational learning and measurement and accountability.

- **Resources:** Managing the flow of financial resources throughout the organization is important, but resources also include people and physical assets such as technology and data. When school districts carefully manage their most valuable resource – people – and understand what investments in technology and data systems are necessary to better support teaching and learning, the entire organization is brought closer to coherence.

- **Environment:** A district's environment includes all the external factors that can have an impact on strategy, operations, and performance; e.g., regulations and statutes, contracts, funding and politics.

One of the main messages of the PELP framework is the importance of discipline and focus in the process of framing a strategy and then using it to transform the organization's culture and the actions of the people in it.

Aligning Resources with Priorities in the Ontario Context: *The Ontario Leadership Framework*[1]

How are these research findings reflected in the *Ontario Leadership Framework*? Within the framework, the core leadership capacity (CLC) "aligning resources with priorities" is recognized as essential to successful leadership.

The CLCs apply across the domains of the school-level practices rather than residing within a particular domain of school level leadership practices. They are supported by the use of personal leadership resources – cognitive, social and psychological resources.

The "aligning resources with priorities" CLC is about strengthening leadership practices and personal leadership resources. This CLC helps ensure that resources – including financial, capital, human resources, curriculum and teaching resources, professional learning resources and program allocations – are linked to priorities in a coherent fashion, with student achievement as the central focus.

The primary challenge implicit in this CLC is one of getting the most educational value for students from resources already available. Addressing this challenge entails good stewardship of public resources and careful alignment of resources in support of the school's improvement priorities to support student success.

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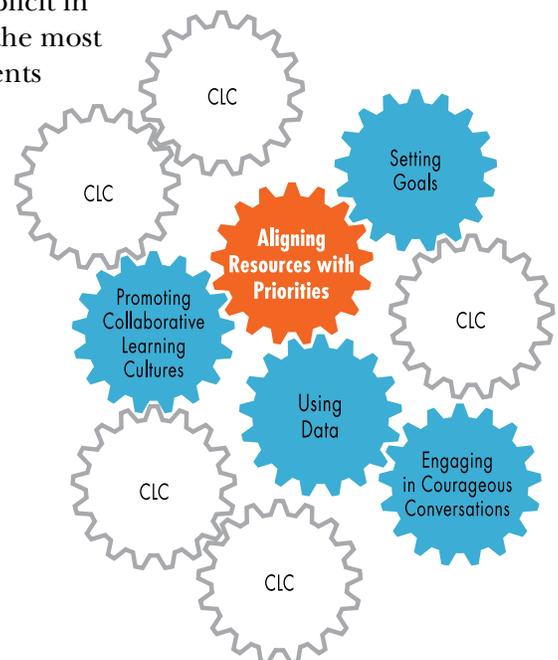
[1] The *Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF)* provides the foundation for implementing the Ontario Leadership Strategy. The OLF incorporates evidence from recent research and provides new insights into what effective leadership looks like.

This table illustrates how "using data" is embedded in the *Ontario Leadership Framework*

DOMAINS OF *THE ONTARIO LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK*	SELECTED SCHOOL-LEVEL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES & EXAMPLES OF WHAT THESE PRACTICES LOOK LIKE IN ACTION	PERSONAL LEADERSHIP RESOURCES: Leaders draw upon their personal leadership resources to effectively enact leadership practices
Setting Directions	**Building a shared vision** • Help staff and diverse stakeholders to understand the relationship between their school's vision and board and provincial policy initiatives and priorities **Identifying specific, shared, short-term goals** • Build consensus among students, staff and diverse stakeholders for the school's goals and priorities	**Cognitive Resources:** • Problem-solving expertise • Knowledge of effective school and classroom conditions that directly affect student learning • Systems thinking
Building Relationships and Developing People	**Stimulating growth in the professional capacities of staff** • Encourage staff to develop and review their own goals for professional growth and the relationship of those goals to school goals and priorities. **Building trusting relationships with and among staff, students and parents** • Model responsibility, integrity and thoroughness in carrying out tasks	
Developing the Organization to Support Desired Practices	**Building collaborative cultures and distributing leadership** • Provide adequate and consistently available resources to support collaborative work **Structuring the organization to facilitate collaboration** • Provide regular opportunities and structures that support teachers in working together on instructional improvement, and establish a system for monitoring their collaborative work. • Distribute leadership for selected tasks **Allocating resources in support of the school's vision and goals** • Manage efficient budgetary processes • Distribute resources in ways that are closely aligned with the school's improvement priorities • Ensure effective oversight and accountability of resources to support priorities	**Social Resources:** • Perceiving emotions • Managing emotions • Acting in emotionally appropriate ways
Improving the Instructional Program	**Staffing the instructional program** • Recruit and select teachers who have the interest and capacity to further the school's vision and goals **Monitoring progress in student learning and school improvement** • Incorporate the explicit use of data when making decisions that relate to student learning and school improvement **Buffering staff from distractions to their work** • Minimize daily disruptions to classroom instructional time	**Psychological Resources:** • Optimism • Self-efficacy • Resilience • Proactivity
Securing Accountability	**Building staff members' sense of internal accountability** • Help staff make connections between school goals and ministry goals in order to strengthen commitment to school improvement efforts **Meeting the demands for external accountability** • Align school targets with board and provincial targets	

Walking the Talk: Building Our Capacity for Aligning Resources with Priorities in the Ontario Context

How can we as leaders further develop our practices and personal leadership resources in this critical area of leadership? The following is a brief sampling of current programs and resources that support the development of our capacity in aligning our resources with priorities.

Ministry Resources and Supports Available to Ontario Leaders

Strengthening Management Capacity within Ontario District School Boards

The Ministry of Education has made a commitment to build public confidence in the public education system by increasing system effectiveness, efficiency, transparency and responsiveness. Strong operational business practices ensure the interest of students and the Ontario taxpayer are appropriately recognized and protected while accountability ensures the desired results are achieved.

Well-managed school boards and schools are environments where academic leadership from directors to principals to teachers can focus on creating good learning environments.

The following projects support education sector leaders in strengthening management capacity and ensure the effective stewardship of resources:

- Operational Reviews of Ontario District School Boards
- Effectiveness and Efficiency (E&E) Advisory Committee Projects, including: the *Report on Leading Practices in Attendance Support for Ontario School Boards*, the *Broader Public Sector (BPS) Expenses Directive Implementation Guide for Ontario School Boards*, and the pending work of the BPS Procurement Directive Working Committee.

Although each of the key initiatives supporting the modernization of business practices and strengthening management capacity across the sector is uniquely diverse in terms of scope, they all share a common strategy:

- Identify opportunities to build and support management capacity across the sector in collaboration with all stakeholders.
- Leverage and share best practices currently in place in the sector, in other jurisdictions, and in the private sector.

Aligning Resources with Priorities "In Action"

The Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement (BIPSA)

The Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement (BIPSA) supports boards in strategically allocating human, financial and program resources. After districts select a SMART (Specific. Measurable. Attainable. Realistic. Timely and Tangible) goal that they believe will leverage student achievement and well-being to the greatest degree, they consider all of the resources at their disposal, as well as the varying needs of schools.

Successful leadership entails a deliberate orchestration of people, programs and other resources in order to achieve the goals in the BIPSA as there are often competing initiatives that can distract from priority goals. The strategic and coordinated allocation of resources provides the supporting conditions that enable schools to carry out an effective instructional program

- Communicate with stakeholders throughout the various stages of all projects, including advice/direction at the front end, input/feedback during the review process, and formal and informal communication on a regular basis; and
- Capitalize on cost savings and cost containment wherever possible.

For more information on sector resources designed to help strengthen management capacity, contact the ministry's School Business Support Branch at 416-212-3173.

Aboriginal Education Office (AEO) – Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework

The key goals of the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework are to advance Aboriginal student achievement and increase understanding about First Nation, Métis, and Inuit cultures, histories, and perspectives for all Ontario students. Central to this work is leadership that builds relationships with Aboriginal communities and families. With the help of the following ministry programs, school leaders are aligning monetary, material and community resources with the following key priority areas related to trust and relationship building:

- **Building professional capacity:** *Voluntary, Confidential Aboriginal Student Self-identification Policies* facilitate data collection and provide valid and reliable information that can be used to understand Aboriginal student needs and monitor their progress. The *Aboriginal Perspectives: The Teacher's Toolkit resource*, and training and Native Studies textbooks – now available on the Trillium List – support teachers in adopting a variety of approaches and tools to integrate Aboriginal perspectives across the curriculum.
- **Getting into action:** *The Funding Opportunities for Aboriginal Education – Engagement and Awareness Building* Initiative provides boards with financial support to engage in shared planning with Aboriginal communities and families to enhance Aboriginal learners' participation in their learning and increase all students' knowledge and awareness.
- **Driving change:** The *Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Supplement* in the GSN provides financial support and flexibility to assist leaders with the delivery of program initiatives in Aboriginal education. In addition, there are leads identified in each of the 72 school boards who meet three times a year to share projects, programs and initiatives.
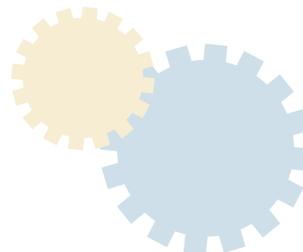
Implementing Full-Day Kindergarten (FDK)

Throughout the province, board leadership teams are committed to the implementation of full-day kindergarten (FDK) with a shared focus on building teams, program, continuity of practice and partnerships. On the ground, school leaders are transforming learning environments and creating the conditions for realizing a shared vision of play-based learning.

The ministry's implementation of full-day kindergarten has ignited adaptive change that requires leaders to align resources with priorities and utilize people resources in innovative and intentional ways. School leaders are influencing and leading transformational change by utilizing their "personal leadership resources" when navigating the change process by:

- building educator efficacy and modelling optimism and resilience throughout the change process involved in building collaborative partnerships within FDK educator teams
- walking the talk in their role as co-learners to support a shift in pedagogy
- building relational trust, which is essential to opening the dialogue for "rethinking, repeating and removing" practices
- building a culture of inquiry that promotes continuity of practice across the grades
- engaging parents by accessing their knowledge and understanding of their child's strengths and interests and using this information to inform programming.

School Mental ASSIST

School ASSIST (Mental Health Awareness, Strategy Selection, and Implementation Support Team) is a provincial implementation support team designed to enhance the capacity of Ontario school boards to promote student mental health and well-being. The team will provide a range of resources and services, in the areas of:

- organizational leadership for effective school mental health
- educator mental health capacity-building
- evidence-based, mental health promotion and prevention programming.

School Mental Health ASSIST is working closely with the Leadership Development Branch to develop modules focused on the organizational conditions required to support effective school mental health initiatives. Within these modules, it is recognized that resource mapping and analysis that involves purposefully aligning resources, needs and effective practices is a critical first step in the development of a coherent, collaborative, and purposeful board mental health strategy. Templates for resource mapping are currently being piloted in 15 boards and will be shared with others next year.

MathGAINS

MathGAINS is a website that provides learning materials for students (Gap Closing, CLIPS and WINS) and professional learning resources for teachers. Recognizing the significant role school and system leaders play in supporting student achievement and well-being, the site has organized leadership resources by role to ensure they are linked to the priorities and the learning needs of both school and system leaders. Using the five Core Leadership Capacities learning materials such as video clips, Adobe Connects, digital research papers, and links to websites are aligned to guide learning-focused conversations about effective practices and approaches in mathematics classrooms. To learn more about MathGAINS, visit the website at www.edugains.ca/newsite/math2/index.html.

Managing Information for Student Achievement (MISA): Collaborating and Allocating Strategically

Investments made since 2005 through the MISA Local Capacity Building (LCB) program have helped boards grow their capacity to collect and use data in support of improved student learning and outcomes. Although LCB program funding was not available in 2011-12, the ministry allocated resources strategically by funding the seven MISA Professional Network Centres (PNCs) to support cross-board collaboration and professional learning. These collaborative, networked, professional learning communities, along with formal research community connections, continue to identify and share effective practices in the use of evidence for improved student outcomes. Their websites (on page 25 of this bulletin) demonstrate their commitment to collectively empowering each other through the free and open exchange of ideas and information.

Publications:

- *Operational Review Guide for District School Boards* provides a summary of the review scope and approach. The guide includes 125 leading practices to support building management capacity in the following areas: Governance and School Board Administration; Human Resource Management & School Staffing/Allocation; Financial Management; and School Operations & Facilities Management.

- *Student Transportation Effectiveness & Efficiency Reviews Leading Practices Guide* provides a summary of best practices emerging from Effectiveness and Efficiency Reviews on transportation consortia. The guide reflects learning and observations from the reviews and identifies leading practices as well as emerging standards. Self-assessment tools for consortium managers as well as details on the documentation requirements associated with each leading practice are also included.
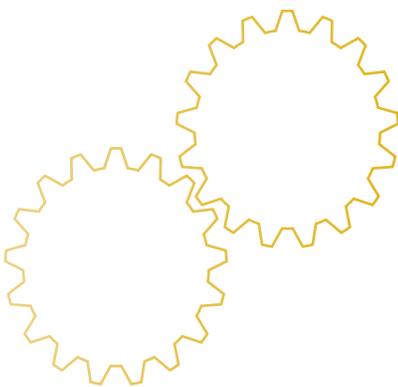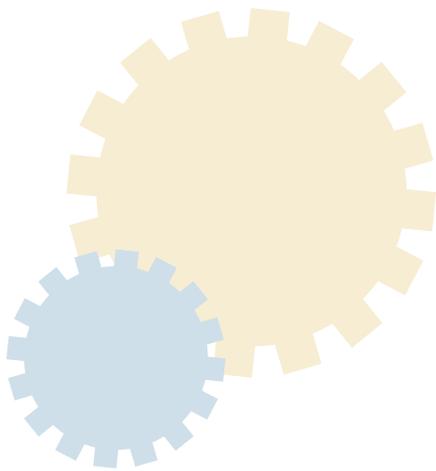
- ***Report on Leading Practices in Attendance Support for Ontario School Boards*** identifies leading practices across the education sector to support student achievement through the development of a healthy work culture and consistent staff attendance. The report provides a practical approach to support the implementation of an effective attendance support program.

- ***Broader Public Sector Expenses Directive Implementation Guide for Ontario School Boards*** is designed to support school board compliance with the Broader Public Sector (BPS) Expenses Directive, which will increase the accountability and transparency of all BPS organizations while making effective use of taxpayer funds. The guide assists school boards in managing the transition, risks and implications of non-compliance with the Directive, with the goal of moving towards full compliance with the Directive and alignment with OPS standards.

For the above four resources please contact the School Business Support Branch at 416-212-3173.

- ***In Conversation*** is a series of thought-provoking discussion papers designed to support professional learning and dialogue, available on the ministry's leadership website at www.education-leadership-ontario.ca. Posted most recently is Dr. Douglas Willms' paper, titled 'Student Engagement: A Leadership Priority' (Spring 2011).

- ***New Leader*** provides practical strategies for student achievement. Posted most recently are: 'Creating the Teaching Learning Critical Pathway Cycle' – Principals' Edition' (2011) by Barb Francis and Audrey Hensen, Hamilton Wentworth District School Board and 'The Distinct Advantage of Tri-Level Alignment' by John De Faveri, Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board. New Leader is published by the Student Achievement Division and is available at www.inspirelearning.ca.

- ***Principals Want to Know (PW2K)*** is a series of tip sheets for principals that focuses on practical issues faced in schools. Drawn from existing resources, these tips are designed to support instructional leadership practice. See for example 'Making Time for Instructional Leadership' (Issue #7, March 2011). *PW2K* is sponsored by the Institute for Education Leadership (IEL) and is available at www.education-leadership-ontario.ca.

- ***K-12 School Effectiveness Framework (SEF)*** is a multi-media resource aligned with the *K-12 School Effectiveness Framework (SEF)* document to support professional learning and reflective practice focused on improving learning for all students. For each component in the *K-12 School Effectiveness Framework (SEF)* – Assessment for, as and of learning; School and Classroom Leadership; Student Voice; Curriculum, Teaching and Learning; Programs and Pathways; and

Home, School and Community Partnerships – there are a number of indicators and some samples of evidence. In the multi-media resource, several video clips which demonstrate effective, evidence-based practice are highlighted for each indicator.

- *Characteristics of High Performing School Systems in Ontario* written by Kenneth Leithwood, the Ontario Ministry of Education's Leadership Advisor, and sponsored by the Institute for Education Leadership (IEL) provides systematic evidence about the characteristics of school districts or school systems capable of achieving ambitious goals for student achievement and how such characteristics develop – provides a robust empirical foundation for the province's school systems in their exercise of leadership. Find this and related publications at www.education-leadership-ontario.ca.
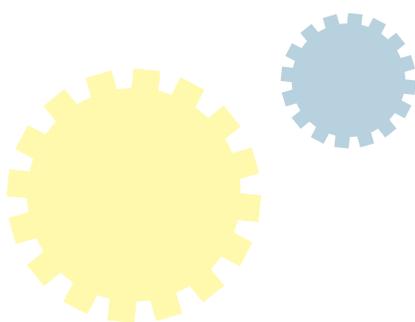
Professional Networks, Podcasts & Webcasts:

- **MISA Professional Network Centres**
  The seven MISA Professional Network Centres operating across the province have independent websites where the supports, resources and tools they've developed are available for use by all school districts. Examples of supports found on these websites include instructional videos, podcasts, presentations, professional development materials, workbooks and guidelines.
  - ♦ Barrie Region MISA PNC www.curriculum.org/MISABARRIE/index.html
  - ♦ London Region MISA PNC www.misalondon.ca
  - ♦ Ottawa Region MISA PNC www.misaeast.on.ca
  - ♦ Sudbury/North Bay Region MISA PNC www.neoen.ca
  - ♦ Thunder Bay Region MISA PNC www.lakeheadschools.ca/misa
  - ♦ Toronto Region MISA PNC www.misatoronto.ca
  - ♦ French-Language MISA PNC www.centregiare.ca

- *Leading Student Achievement (LSA) Web Network* is a professional online network established for teachers, principals and system leaders to share their thinking, practices and resources. Educators are active participants in these online communities, helping to shape the content and direction of the community itself. The community is as strong as the educators who contribute to it, sharing resources such as videos and documents, posing questions and contributing to rich discussions on topics that are meaningful for them. The LSA Web Network enables educators to focus their own professional learning based on the topics and issues most meaningful for them and their students. The LSA Web Network is open to all educators. To join the web network, English users can visit http://lsanetwork.ning.com and French users can visit http://reseautagedre.ning.com.

- *Ontario Education Leaders (OEN)* is a professional network, a Ning set up for school and district leaders across Ontario. It provides a forum for the discussion of topics of interest to members about leadership practice. Principal Congress materials are provided on the Ning along with the *PW2K* series. Members are encouraged to post items, share ideas, ask questions, and suggest topics for new issues of *PW2K*. Ontario leaders can sign up to join the Ning by visiting the Institute for Education Leadership (IEL) website at www.education-leadership-ontario.ca/content/home

Professional Learning Opportunities and Resources Offered by Ontario Leadership Associations:

- **Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes (ADFO) and Association des gestionnaires de l'éducation franco-ontarienne (AGÉFO)**
- **Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario (CPCO) and Ontario Catholic Supervisory Officers' Association (OCSOA)**
- **Ontario Principals' Council (OPC) and Ontario Public Supervisory Officials' Association (OPSOA)**

The six Ontario professional leadership associations listed above represent vice-principals, principals and supervisory officers and share in common their commitment to promoting a collaborative culture of professional learners. Professional learning opportunities and resources offered by the associations, individually and/or in partnership, build and strengthen leadership practice related to all five Core Leadership Capacities.

To learn more about the professional learning supports these associations offer, visit:

- ADFO at www.adfo.org
- AGÉFO at www.agefo.ca
- CPCO at www.cpco.on.ca
- OCSOA at www.ocsoa.ca
- OPC at www.principals.on.ca
- OPSOA at www.opsoa.org.

Dialogue:
What You Told Us

Ideas Into Action is designed to support the capacity building being undertaken by the ministry, Ontario's provincial leadership associations, the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) and districts. It is intended to contribute to your ongoing professional learning and provide you and your colleagues with a meaningful springboard for reflection and professional dialogue and for putting these ideas into action.

Reader Insights and Perspectives on the Five CLCs

In the last issue of *Ideas Into Action*, we asked you to share your thoughts and experiences. Here is a sampling of comments received:

• **Connective Intelligence® and the Five Core Leadership Capacities**
Connective Intelligence® (C.I.) is the capacity to harness the combined use of one's cognitive and emotional capabilities, transforming intentions into effective actions and results.

"During the Ontario Principals' Council's Connective Intelligence® Program, participants are given the opportunity to examine each of the five Core Leadership Capacities in order to develop a clearer understanding of the meaning embedded in each and the action required by each. They then refer to six dimensions of thinking within the framework of "Judge", "Describe" and "Realize" in order to determine which type of thinking is necessary to drive success for the behaviours outlined in each of the leadership capacities. The entire activity underlines the importance of consciously selecting the most appropriate thinking to achieve the most effective results. Learn more about the Connective Intelligence® program at www.principals.ca."

• **Board Leadership Development Teams (BLDS)**
BLDS teams report that *Ideas Into Action* are valued and used extensively in professional learning. The following is a sampling of comments:
♦ "*Ideas Into Action* bulletins reinforce that there is alignment among all ministry initiatives. Leadership cannot operate as a 'silo' within a teaching and learning organization."
♦ "I personally find these bulletins outstanding – rich in current research and practical."
♦ "The CLCs supported by *Ideas Into Action* have become our 'story starter.' The conversations and unpacking of these strategies have become an integral part of professional learning and inquiry."
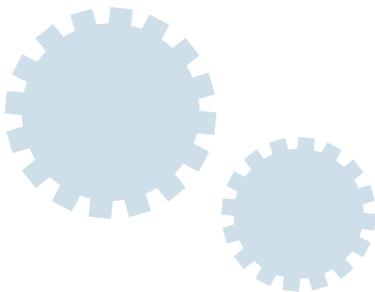
- **The Leading Student Achievement (LSA) Project**
  The *Leading Student Achievement* (LSA) project is in its seventh year with over 2,000 schools participating. LSA is led by the three Ontario principals' associations – the Ontario Principals' Council, the Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario, and l'Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes – in partnership with and funded by the Student Achievement Division of the Ontario Ministry of Education, and supported by Curriculum Services Canada.

  Ideas into Action: the *Exploring Core Leadership Capacities* series has been a valuable resource in support of the goals of the project. Participants have been encouraged to incorporate the core leadership capacities into their LSA learning plans. Individual issues of *Ideas into Action* have been:
  - distributed at LSA symposia and regional sessions in the fall and the spring
  - emailed as attachments to LSA participants
  - provided to participants of a web conference on aligning the leadership capacities and LSA initiatives.

  "The Spring 2010 issue of *Ideas Into Action* – Promoting Collaborative Learning Cultures: Putting the Promise into Practice has been especially useful in supporting one of the main goals of the LSA project."

- **Engaging in Courageous/Open-to-Learning Conversations**
  "One of the most significant roles for principals in the School Support Initiative is to create and maintain a culture of collaborative inquiry through which the work of the professional learning team is accomplished. A recent professional learning session provided secondary principals with an opportunity to refine their skills in engaging in "learning conversations" to help ensure that the work of professional learning teams is aligned with the purpose and vision to improve student learning and achievement. The principal observes not only that evidence-based instructional strategies are being employed to address identified student learning needs, but also that the strategies are implemented effectively. As needs change, the principal may engage in a "learning conversation" with the professional learning team and/ or individual teachers to provide additional professional learning support to enhance teaching and learning."
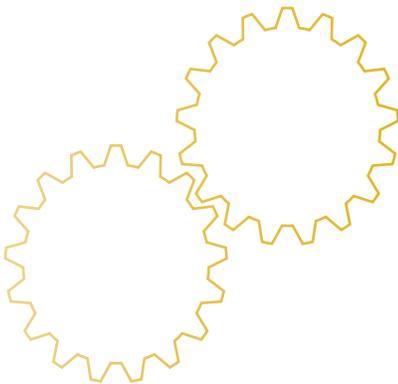
Selected Resources and Publications: Recommended by Ontario Leaders
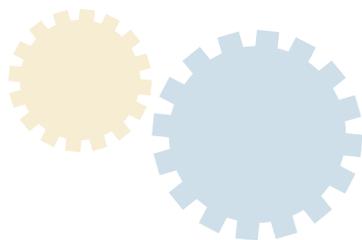
Change Leader: Learning to Do What Matters Most by Fullan (2011a) focuses on the following seven core practices of leadership Fullan argues are vital for leading in today's complex world: practice drives theory, be resolute, motivate the masses, collaborate to compete, learn confidently, know your impact, and sustain simplexity.

Change Leadership: A Practical Guide to Transforming Our Schools by Wagner et al (2006), members of Harvard's Change Leadership Group grows out of a five-year study of school improvement. Wagner et al present a framework to analyze the work of school change and provide exercises that guide educators through the development of their practice.

Correcting the Money Myth: Rethinking School Resources by Grubb (2010) revisits the concept of "the money myth", which he says is the "contention that any education problem requires increased spending and, conversely, that reform is impossible without more funding." Grubb argues that many reforms require resources that money cannot buy and what is needed is building capacity of schools to use resources more effectively and to create new resources on their own.

Dealing with Information Overload by the Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario (2011) offers tips for avoiding "technostress" by "taming information overload at work."

District Leadership that Works: Striking the Right Balance by Marzano and Waters (2009) addresses the central research question: "What is the strength of relationship between district-level administrative actions and student achievement?"

Doubling Student Performance…and Finding the Resources to Do It edited by Odden and Archibald (2009) combines the latest research with the authors' national study of diverse schools that were able to significantly boost student achievement. This resource provides examples and case studies, strategies for increasing student achievement and clear steps for alignment of resources with priorities.

Finding Your Leadership Focus: What Matters Most for Student Results by Reeves (2011) blends research and practice to address a major challenge faced by today's school leaders: an ever-growing number of programs and initiatives. Reeves shows how leaders can determine what is truly most important based on their local concerns, challenges, populations and other school factors.

Focus: Elevating the Essentials to Radically Improve Student Learning by Schmoker (2011) makes the case that what is "essential" for schools amounts to three simple things: coherent curriculum (*what* we teach), sound lessons (*how* we teach) and purposeful reading and writing in every discipline, or *authentic literacy* (integral to both what and how we teach).

Good Strategy Bad Strategy: The Difference and Why It Matters by Rumelt (2011a) provides a clear way to create and implement a powerful action-oriented strategy by shedding light on the elements of "bad strategy" and awakening an understanding of the power of a "good strategy."

Improving Teaching and Learning when Budgets are Tight by Odden and Picus (2011) shows that schools can successfully face the dual challenge of tighter education budgets and demands to raise achievement levels. The authors point to successful districts that have transformed their strategic approach by focusing on costs; developing a new, more powerful school vision; identifying and allocating resources to align with that vision; and rethinking teacher compensation.

Investing in Improvement: Strategy and Resource Allocation in Public School Districts by Childress (2010) is a working paper that offers concrete examples of improved productivity and efficiencies at the district level, drawing from the author's experience working with districts and developing such case studies for Harvard Business School.

Linking Leadership to Student Learning edited by Leithwood and Louis (2012) draws on an ambitious five-year study on educational leadership to show how school leadership improves student achievement. The book is divided into two parts: school-level leadership including the effects of distributed leadership on teaching and learning and district leadership and its relationship with school and system leadership.

Managing School Districts for High Performance: Cases in Public Education Leadership edited by Childress, Elmore, Grossman and Johnson (2007) brings together more than 20 case studies and other readings that offer a powerful and transformative approach to advancing and sustaining the work of school improvement. The *Instructor's Guide* is designed to be a companion to the text and provide support in using the cases and adapting them for use in professional learning for school and system leaders.

Now You See It: How the Brain Science of Attention Will Transform the Way We Live, Work, and Learn by Davidson (2011) grew out of the author's decision in partnership with Duke University to provide free iPods to the 2003 freshman class, a radical experiment that is at the heart of this book. Using cutting-edge research on the brain, Davidson shows how "attention blindness" has become one of our society's greatest challenges.
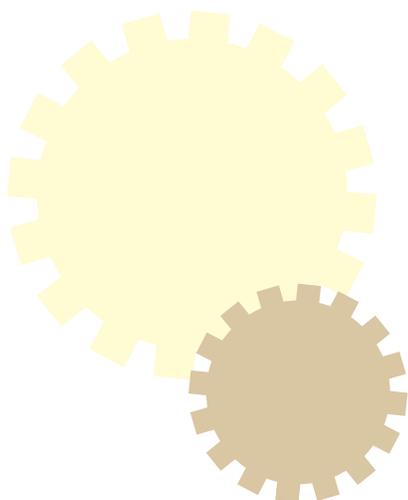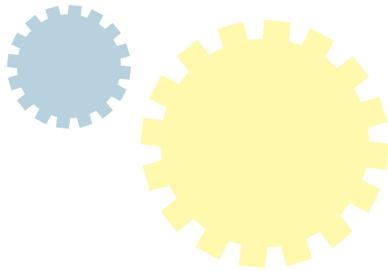
Organizing Schools for Improvement: Lessons from Chicago by Bryk et al (2010) chronicles a groundbreaking systematic longitudinal study of the internal workings and external community conditions that distinguished improving elementary schools from those that failed to improve. Through this research, the authors identified five organizational features of schools that interact with life inside classrooms and are essential to advancing student achievement.

Resourceful Leadership: Tradeoffs and Tough Decisions on the Road to School Improvement by City (2008) examines how tradeoffs among time, people, and money are integrated into school leaders' improvement strategies in the context of two small urban high schools.

Setting Leadership Priorities: What's Necessary, What's Nice, and What's Got to Go by Lovely (2006) provides school leaders with practical strategies for "(a) stepping back from the fray, (b) asking 'who is better equipped to handle this problem' or (c) say 'no thank you' without feeling guilty about it."

The Money Myth: School Resources, Outcomes, and Equity by Grubb (2009) argues for "a different approach to schooling, to implement the many interconnected elements necessary for a complex and constructivist approach, and to provide both the complex array of school resources and the non-educational policies necessary" for effective and equitable schools.

The Strategic School: How to Make the Most of Your School's People, Time, and Money by Miles and Frank (2008) focuses on this question "How can schools best use the resources they already have?" The authors explore the link between purposeful resource allocation and academic achievement and demonstrate how educational leaders can develop successful and strategic schools by assessing how well they use all available resources – people, time, and money – by creating effective alternatives to meet goals.

Unleashing Your Leadership Potential: Seven Strategies for Success by Luc (2009) provides strategies leaders can implement to unleash their unique leadership potential. Luc's evidence-based approach provides real-world cases and offers insights for both aspiring leaders and those who mentor and coach others.

Your Brain at Work: Strategies for Overcoming Distraction, Regaining Focus, and Working Smarter All Day Long by Rock (2009) offers research about brain functions, limitations and capacities. It shows readers how to direct their own brain chemistry to achieve fulfillment and success. Questions addressed include: why it's so hard to focus and how to better manage distractions; how to collaborate with others more effectively; and why providing feedback is so difficult and how to make it easier.

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