



Enacting Greatness: Leadership by Design

Growth Minded Practices for California Principals

**Principal Excellence Project (PEP)
Task Force**



Message from Resourcing Excellence in Education (REEd)

In 2014, **Resourcing Excellence in Education (REEd)** was asked to lead the two-year statewide pilot: Integrated Professional Learning Systems Initiative (IPLS) in support of the California Department of Education's rollout of recommendations for the professional learning and teacher evaluation practices of *Greatness by Design: Supporting Outstanding Teaching to Sustain a Golden State* report by State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson's Task Force on Educator Excellence (2012). The IPLS initiative focused on ensuring that the evaluation of teaching is an integral component of every professional growth system in California.

IPLS is led by Drs. Joanne Bookmyer and Susan O'Hara, working together with a statewide network of Local Education Agencies (LEAs) that includes school district partners and county offices of education. The partners, individually and collectively, are developing and testing prototypes for supporting professional growth at the center of teacher evaluation systems. Results of the pilot will inform California Department of Education's support for educator effectiveness across all California school districts.

IPLS also undertook the task of identifying and making recommendations related to high-leverage principal leadership practices that advance continuous teacher growth for student learning. Addressing principal evaluation directly was not within the charge of the **Principal Excellence Project (PEP) Task Force**. Nonetheless, this report contributes to the effectiveness of any accountability process by identifying which principal actions should be the basis of an evaluation or reflection process. The combination of existing California Professional Standards for Education Leaders, Descriptions of Practice, and the newly developed IPLS High-Leverage Leadership Practices provide the tools for principals to devise their own course of action, for principal coaches to have confidence in their guidance, and for principal evaluators to ground evaluations using district goals, portfolio formats or Individual Learning Plans. In effect, these tools could become the basis for a principal effectiveness system. The key elements of a growth plan would include identifying an area of needed or desired growth; a self-assessment of strengths, growth areas, interests and preferences; an actionable and realistic plan including goals, resources needed and timelines; desired outcomes and a way to celebrate successes (Personal and Professional, 2012).

After conducting this study into principal leadership from the literature and practitioner experiential perspectives, members of the PEP Task Force are convinced that improving professional learning for California principals around these high-leverage leadership practices and key strategies will increase principals' capacity to lead schools and, ultimately, advance the growth-minded concept of continuous teacher and principal learning and development.

THE CHARGE

The Charge for the Principal Excellence Project (PEP) Task Force

As part of an Integrated Professional Learning System that advances continuous teacher growth and enhances student learning, the **Principal Excellence Project (PEP)** project investigators will:

1. Investigate, identify, and recommend high-leverage leadership practices for California principals; and
2. Identify the necessary knowledge and skills, resources, organizational structures, and interpersonal behaviors needed to effectively implement the identified practices.

For this report, the PEP Task Force narrowly defined high-leverage leadership practices as those that have the highest probability of producing direct or indirect positive effects on student success, based on both compelling research and the extensive experience of the Task Force and interviewed school leaders.

Links to Key Resources

CALIFORNIA PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FOR EDUCATION LEADERS (CPSEL)
<http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/standards/CPSEL-booklet-2014.pdf>

MOVING LEADERSHIP STANDARDS INTO EVERYDAY WORK: DESCRIPTIONS OF PRACTICE,
SECOND EDITION
<http://www.wested.org/resources/descriptions-of-practice/>

CALIFORNIA ADMINISTRATOR PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS (CAPE)
<http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/standards/SVC-Admin-Handbook-2014.pdf>

QUALITY PROFESSIONAL LEARNING STANDARDS (QPLS)
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ps/qpls.asp>

CALIFORNIA STANDARDS FOR THE TEACHING PROFESSION (CSTP)
<http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/standards/CSTP-2009.pdf>

The Successful School Framework

“The critical need for investments in teacher and principal learning has been made clear over and over again in efforts aimed at educational change. Those who have worked to improve schools have found that every aspect of school reform depends on highly skilled educators who are well supported in healthy school organizations.”

(California Department of Education, 2012, p. 7)

Recognizing that principals are frequently admonished to perform the near impossible with minimal resources and, realistically, only the authority their staff and supervisors grant them, the goal of the Principal Excellence Project Task Force is to identify and recommend the highest leverage principal leadership practices and key strategies for operationalizing the recommendations of *Greatness by Design: Supporting Outstanding Teaching to Sustain a Golden State* (California Department of Education, 2012). California State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson’s Task Force on Educator Excellence charted a course for reclaiming California’s status as a national and global leader in educational innovation and equitable access for all of its more than 6.2 million

K-12 students in public and charter schools. The preponderance of its recommendations address factors of teacher practice that directly impact the quality of instruction. However, the Task Force recognized and validated the need for the highest quality principal leadership to support teacher effectiveness. The advent of changing demographics and state policies (e.g. Common Core State Standards, new administrator preparation standards) and approaches to educational funding (e.g. Local Control Funding Formula) reinforces the need to re-conceptualize the role of the principal.

The Educator Excellence Task Force assessed the condition of teaching in California, including the leadership related areas of how teachers are supported throughout their careers and inspired to do their best work. *Greatness by Design* states that we must build capacity among principals and teachers to lead schools with a sense of urgency and unrelenting focus on student success (California Department of Education, 2012, p. 72). Research commissioned by the Wallace Foundation (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010) confirms that, “leadership is second only to classroom instruction as an influence on student learning” (p. 9). Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu & Easton (2010), Fullan (2014), and Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon (2014) all identify ongoing, focused teacher and principal professional learning as essential to, and a characteristic of, schools that continuously improve as they adapt to meet the learning and social needs of students.

Resourcing Excellence in Education (REEd) tasked the Principal Excellence Project Task Force, hereafter referred to as the PEP Task Force, with identifying high-leverage leadership practices that expand the capacity of principals to inspire and direct instructional improvement and increase school effectiveness.

To this end, the PEP Task Force applied REEd’s continuous improvement process, which is grounded in design thinking processes and improvement science concepts. The team conducted a comprehensive review of the literature on effective schools and principals, surveyed and interviewed school leaders, studied the California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2014) and the Quality Professional Learning Standards (California Department on

Education, 2015) as well as the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2014) Standards, and invoked the PEP Task Force's collective 250 years of experience in education.

THE SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS FRAMEWORK

To make sense of the large amount of information gathered during the research portion of this project, the team developed a tiered conceptual framework, the Successful Schools Framework. It identifies characteristics of successful schools, high-leverage principal leadership practices, and key strategies to implement the leadership practices.



CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS

Research by the PEP Task Force led to identification of characteristics common to highly effective schools across much of the literature and in discussions among educators. The characteristics are largely interdependent; they bolster each other and are presented here so that each subsequent characteristic builds on the previous one. Analysis and interpretation of data revealed that effective principals typically enact multiple strategies as they move their schools toward success.

SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS:

1. Embody the belief that all people learn, change, and adapt to positive and negative environments.
2. Enact a shared vision of collective responsibility for the welfare and achievement of all students.
3. Promote culturally responsive communities, and have staff who recognize the impact of biases on student learning and work to remove such barriers.
4. Systematically inquire into their practice, monitor their progress, and make adjustments based on evidence.
5. Develop and equitably distribute financial and human resources to carry out missions.
6. Expect and support professional learning by all adults.
7. Hire and retain principals and staff who are adaptive, flexible, and collectively engage in school leadership.
8. Receive consistent, coherent, coordinated, and sustainable support from the community, district and state.

These Characteristics of Successful Schools can best be explained in practical terms. The principal leads the community in a shared vision made real by their choice of actions and their plan for resources to manifest it. Every adult in that school should model the type of continuous learning they want for students, and take responsibility for the collective success of the school community. Glickman (1987) stated that a successful school is foremost an organization that defines good education for itself, through its goals and desired practices, and then engages in collective action to achieve that vision. These characteristics underpin the growth-mindset model (Dweck, 2006) advanced in this report and are elemental to an integrated system of lifelong learning for students and the adults who teach them.

HIGH-LEVERAGE PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

“Creating schools that enable all children to learn requires the development of systems that enable all educators and schools to learn. At the heart, this is a capacity building enterprise.”

(Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 327)

To build leadership capacity for student learning, this report presents five high-leverage principal leadership practices that are aligned with the PEP Task Force’s Successful Schools Framework. Like many other terms in the educational lexicon, the term “high-leverage” has been generalized and morphed to convey multiple meaning. For this report, the PEP Task Force narrowly defined it as practices that have the highest probability of producing direct or indirect positive effects on student success, based on both compelling research and extensive experience.

For each practice, selected strategies are included to help principals implement the practice. The term “selected strategies” is intentionally used because the strategies identified herein are not meant to be all-inclusive. Implementing any individual strategy may lead to positive outcomes. Strategies, however, are intended to work together for greater impact and are related across high-leverage practices and increase the overall impact of *all* identified practices.

The PEP Task Force avoids using common or contemporary jargon as much as possible in order to focus on the key concepts of practices or strategies, not on the originator or a potential branded product. In this way, the practices and strategies put forward have the broadest application to the myriad contexts of education in California. For example, the PEP Task Force holds the value of learning communities to be of paramount importance to a collaborative culture that centers on student outcomes. Similarly, we have promoted systemic shared leadership structures and opportunities. We have not, however, used the terms “Professional Learning Communities” or “distributed leadership.” While strict adherence to a Professional Learning Community protocol as DuFour and colleagues (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2010) have envisioned it may be the best possible option, the key concept for all readers and users of this report is the routine-embedded sharing of student data and plans to improve outcomes. Likewise, given the time demands and constraints on all principals, the key concept of distributed leadership as studied and defined by Spillane and Coldren (2011) holds that the principal maintains or gains influence when a vision is shared such that it can be advanced by any number of actors in the school. The newly adopted Descriptors of Practice for the CPSEL- 2015 (available at <http://www.wested.org/>) reinforce this idea by characterizing masterful leadership as the ability to create structures than can be sustained by other stakeholder leaders.

Of particular note is the fact that the PEP Task Force attempted to write each high-leverage leadership practice in a manner whereby it could be measured or observed via traditional observational, qualitative, and quantitative protocols. With a small amount of effort, principals can establish procedures or systems whereby they can ascertain whether or not they are making progress in implementing and successfully executing an identified leadership practice. With reference to measuring the degree to which selected high-leverage leadership practices are being implemented or executed, principals need simply to recall the 3Ms of measurement—meaningful, measurable, and able to be monitored. To a degree, the strategies associated with each high-leverage practice can serve as guideposts for principals as they develop academic action plans to advance continuous teacher growth and enhance student learning.

The PEP Task Force found a dearth of material focused on principal actions that impact student growth. However, at the same time a preponderance of material offered endless lists of principal tasks that differed from one author to another. Thus, the identified high leadership practices and the strategies to enact them are by no means exhaustive, nor should they be. The goal was to filter the multitude of directives, “secrets,” and “steps” into the least number of interwoven, essential and interactive actions as a way to ensure principal’s precious and limited time is maximized both quantitatively and qualitatively.

While this report is primarily designed to guide practicing principals, feedback from a wide range of educators revealed a number of other potential uses:

- Principal supervision, a widely varying endeavor at best, can be informed and/or directed by the high-leverage practices when customized for a principal’s skill level, interests, or challenges and supported by a supervisor;
- With the advent of coaching for new administrators provided by credentialing agencies, the high-leverage practices and strategies can become a common language between a new principal, his/her coach and district supervisors;
- In the absence of communication between a district and the credentialing agency, a coach can be confident when guiding a new administrator when using the Successful School Framework and the high-leverage practices and strategies it employs; and
- In the absence of a professional community of peers, principals can support each other’s growth as they enact the identified practices, strategies and planning tools.

To summarize, principals seeking to enact greatness at their schools need to realize that the evolution of change is a journey, not an event. Leaders effect change when they take the time to “provide direction and exercise influence” (Louis et al., 2010, p. 9). The PEP Task Force recommends that when beginning to implement the high-leverage practices a principal start with one or two practices based on identified high priority school needs.

HIGH-LEVERAGE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES (HLLP)	STRATEGIES THAT SUPPORT HLLPs
<p>#1 TEACHER GROWTH</p> <p>Effective principals apply coherent systems of teacher assistance and development to improve instruction and student learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Adopt or create a standards-based definition of good teaching with all teaching staff. B. Develop observation, coaching, and feedback skills among teaching staff that enable interactions focused on the improvement of instructional practices. C. Provide resources that support teacher collaboration, allowing time to analyze student needs and progress, plan high quality instruction, and celebrate successes. D. Provide all staff with professional learning opportunities that respond to student learning and social-emotional needs. E. Facilitate continuous learning about teaching through the lens of equity for all students using current research and practice.
<p>#2 EQUITY-CENTERED CULTURE</p> <p>Effective principals, considering the race, culture, and socio-economic, and linguistic status of students, take specific actions to establish and maintain collective responsibility for maximizing the potential of every student.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Develop a culture of caring adults who build relationships with students in order to provide needed support, build mutual respect and a sense of belonging and engagement in the school community. B. Establish and communicate norms and expectations with all members of the school community that promotes a positive learning and work environment based on principles of social justice. C. Provide continuous professional learning opportunities for all staff about the factors that impact the achievement gap, (race, culture, and socio-economic status as well as other factors related to diversity on school success). D. Assign the most accomplished instructors to the students with the highest academic need. E. Engage families and the larger community to solicit expertise and advice in matters related to equity and diversity. F. Seek out and allocate resources to support positive school climate and equity goals.

<p>#3 COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP</p> <p>Effective principals facilitate a shared vision of a democratic education by establishing and maintaining inclusive structures that build leadership capacity for all members of the school community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Collaborate with stakeholders to revisit, develop, and communicate the shared vision of the school. B. Establish structures that promote a culture of collaboration, and a sense of trust and belonging among staff and the school community. C. Cultivate and provide support for leadership opportunities among all members of the school community. D. Lead stakeholder understanding budgets and allocations and how to build capacity for all types of resources.
<p>#4 PRINCIPAL GROWTH</p> <p>Effective principals model commitment to ongoing learning to sustain and enhance leadership skills that improve instruction and the learning community as a whole.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Engage in a professional community with peers within the district and county. B. Acquire a coach and/or mentor for him/herself for the purpose of supportive reflection and the continuous improvement of leadership practices. C. Align professional learning provided for and by staff to the Quality Professional Learning Standards and participate fully in those learning opportunities. D. Reflect on his/her own practice and seeks guidance from the CPSEL and associated Descriptions of Practice to establish goals and monitor progress. E. Seek the required training to effectively manage all types of resources.
<p>#5 EVIDENCE-BASED DECISIONS</p> <p>Effective principals engage the learning community in evidence-based decision making.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Adopt or construct a system for continuous inquiry into instructional practices for improving student learning. B. Inventory all types of available data to determine what data is needed to monitor instruction and student learning. C. Ensure that teachers have opportunities to analyze, query, interpret, and make decisions based on data. D. Inform the school community about initiatives, the evidence leading to change, and the resulting outcomes.

High-Leverage Leadership Practice #1: Teacher Growth

EFFECTIVE PRINCIPALS APPLY COHERENT SYSTEMS OF TEACHER ASSISTANCE AND DEVELOPMENT TO IMPROVE INSTRUCTION AND STUDENT LEARNING.

WHAT IT IS

This practice focuses on the most effective and efficient ways to support teacher professional learning to increase student outcomes. It does this by redefining roles so that principals and teachers share in instructional leadership. Together, principals and teachers define good teaching. They also identify and implement systems for teacher growth that are research-based, reasonable, motivate more effective teaching, and are consistently applied.

STRATEGIES

- Adopt or create a definition of good teaching with all teaching staff that utilizes a standards-based teaching model.
- Develop observation, coaching and feedback skills among teaching staff that enable interactions focused on the improvement of instructional practices.
- Provide resources that support teacher collaboration, allowing time to analyze student needs and progress, plan high quality instruction, and celebrate successes.
- Provide all staff with professional learning opportunities that respond to student learning and social-emotional needs.
- Facilitate continuous learning about teaching through the lens of equity for all students using current research and practice.

WHY IT MATTERS

Over the last few decades changes in education that were intended to improve student learning and academic achievement have resulted in defining the role of the principal as a direct instructional leader. This has increased principal responsibilities and job stress, while decreasing job satisfaction (Fullan, 2014). Due to the complexity of the work and high expectations of principals, the first key to maximizing principal impact on student learning is to redefine the principal's role so that it is “to lead the school's teachers in a process of learning to improve their teaching, while learning alongside them about what works and what doesn't” (p. 55).

In a growth-based model (Dweck, 2006), professional learning is pivotal to the improvement of teaching. Supporting and facilitating teacher learning is one of the most important tasks for every school principal (Glickman et al., 2014; Fullan, 2014). To build a school culture that can identify its own professional learning needs, the principal must first establish the structures that yield opportunities for teachers to learn. The principal's instructional leadership role needs to be as **lead learner**. He or she should help teachers determine their learning needs, provide support, and learn along with them. The California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (CPSEL) reinforces the lead learner role, stating in

Standard 2 that, “education leaders shape a collaborative culture of teaching and learning informed by professional standards and focused on students and professional growth” (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2014, p. 44).

The use of coherent and common systems and protocols, and universal language for best pedagogical and classroom cultural practices, regardless of the content area or grade level, provides the basis for shared understanding of the essential elements of teaching. Systems of teacher assistance and development foster trusting environments that open doors to real professional growth for teachers. “Given the pace of change in schools with shifts in student demographics, curriculum updates, and new instructional approaches, teaching must be the *learning* profession” (Lipton and Wellman, 2013, p. 1).

Taken together, the HLLP’s recommended in this report will surface important questions for any school context about its culture, climate and the intersection with student learning. Authentic professional development will naturally arise in the process of addressing those questions.

- Teacher-selected professional learning, especially when selected through teacher collaboration, can be effective in helping teachers make changes and design interventions that lead to improved student learning outcomes.
- Principals and teachers can collaborate to determine needed professional learning based on shared beliefs about good instruction, observations of teachers’ practice and the conversations that engenders. (Strategies A, B and C of this HLLP.)
- Both the creation of an equity-centered culture and collaborative leadership structures empower stakeholders to look broadly at factors affecting the welfare of students as well as their achievement data, opening doors to a broader view of professional learning that will serve student needs. (HLLP #2 and #3).
- Principals who are routinely involved in professional learning themselves may be more attuned to the adult learning process and the range of opportunities that can be created within the organization to learn together. (HLLP #4).
- Evidence-based decisions lead to identifying priorities for improvement, as well as identifying areas of strength on which to capitalize. (HLLP #5).

High-Leverage Leadership Practice #2: Equity-Centered Culture

EFFECTIVE PRINCIPALS, CONSIDERING THE RACE, CULTURE, LINGUISTIC, AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF STUDENTS TAKE TARGETED ACTIONS TO ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MAXIMIZING THE POTENTIAL OF EVERY STUDENT.

WHAT IT IS

This practice lays the groundwork for a climate of inclusion and responsiveness for all student and adults in the school's community, while simultaneously maintaining a primary focus on meeting the challenges of doing whatever is necessary to meet the most urgent student needs.

STRATEGIES

- Develop a culture of caring adults who build relationships with students in order to provide needed support, build mutual respect and a sense of belonging and engagement in the school community.
- Establish, maintain, and nurture a positive learning and work environment based on principles of social justice.
- Provide continuous professional learning for all staff about the impact of race, culture and socioeconomic status, expectations, and biases on student achievement.
- Assign the most accomplished instructors to the students with the highest academic need.
- Engage families and the larger community as experts and advisors in matters related to equity and diversity.
- Seek out and allocate resources to support positive school climate and equity goals.

WHY IT MATTERS

This practice is tightly targeted to address the academic and social needs for the student populations historically and persistently underserved. While all children deserve attention from competent and caring adults who will honor their diverse characteristics, only characteristics of race, language, and socio-economic status are directly correlated with the gaps in opportunity and achievement. The labels for these children have served to marginalize their needs, as if success for the majority in some way has justified the status quo in teaching and leadership so detrimental to these students. Given shifts in the

In 1979, Ronald Edmonds (p. 15), referring to the urban poor, wrote:

“We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us; we already know more than we need to do that; and whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven’t so far.”

population and instructional landscape, that label is no longer accurate and demands reprioritization of educational goals and the methods to achieve them with all children.

Thirty-six years later we are still talking about inequity of educational experience without having achieved broad or replicable advancements to close achievement and opportunity gaps, or perhaps as importantly, to make school a valuable personal experience. Children of color and poverty are taught largely by white teachers who comprise 82% of all teachers in the country (73% in California), creating a “diversity gap” (Helland, 2014), for relationship building and modeling. Further compounding the inequities, segregated school environments “have fewer resources, tend to have teachers with less experience, and are teaching outside of their areas of specialty” (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014). A long history of lack of will to resolve the obvious long-standing inequities remains embedded in our current system. When the State of California can defend itself in *Williams v. California*, (*Williams et al. v. State of California*, 2000) a lawsuit brought to correct egregious inequities in the public schools, by explaining how it “has no responsibility” for such conditions (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 153) one has to ask who should be accountable—students who take tests poorly or the system that designs their success or failure.

With the advent of requirements of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), new administrator preparation standards, and alignment of fiscal allocations, California policy makers have sent a clear message that our future depends on the success of our students. However, that effort is endangered when, as professionals, we remain reluctant to identify our own unconscious biases, our lack of understanding for conditions beyond our own experience that directly impact the opportunity for academic success in school, or speak up about the misguided acts of our colleagues. Courageous leaders must prepare for resistance to inquiry into the daily practice of teaching and learning. At the same time they must expect the best of themselves and others, and foster that same courageous leadership in their school community.

Creating an equity-centered school community culture engenders candid, sometimes difficult, conversations about everything from segregated programs to attendance procedures. It also requires reaching out intentionally to marginalized families and the larger community. The principal’s ability to build the needed capacity will be pivotal to success.

Enacting the following strategies calls for the courage to transcend fear and resistance and to calmly do what is right according to our democratic ideals and our avowed guardianship for our collective future. It is quite likely this practice requires breaking whatever silence must be broken to place children bound for another generation of inequity above all other concerns. If equity is really a “principal’s passion” (Singleton & Linton, 2006), s/he must ensure collective responsibility for equitable opportunities to learn and appropriate supports to maximize students’ potential.

High-Leverage Leadership Practice #3: Collaborative Leadership

EFFECTIVE PRINCIPALS ESTABLISH AND COMMUNICATE A SHARED VISION OF A DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION. THIS IS DONE BY ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING INCLUSIVE STRUCTURES THAT BUILD LEADERSHIP CAPACITY FOR ALL MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY.

WHAT IT IS

In their new roles, “principals must adapt from having largely managerial roles to being architects of collaborative learning organizations and adult developers” (Drago-Severson, 2007, p. 4). Principals make that shift by sharing a vision for equity, by promoting a culture of collaboration and trust, sharing leadership and ensuring informed resource allocation. In doing so, principals have a unique opportunity to create a school culture that mirrors the best elements of our democracy—creating and enacting a vision for a community in which the members wish to live and work and share the decisions that will benefit the next generation of children. Most importantly, “collective leadership explains a significant proportion of variation in student achievement across schools. Higher-achieving schools award leadership influence to all school members and other stakeholders to a greater degree than lower-achieving schools. These differences are most significant in relation to the leadership exercised by school teams, parents, and students” (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008, p. 1).

STRATEGIES

- Collaborate with stakeholders to revisit, develop, and communicate the shared vision of the school community.
- Establish structures that promote a culture of collaboration, and a sense of trust and belonging among staff and the school community.
- Cultivate and provide support for leadership opportunities among all members of the school community.
- Include stakeholders in the development of the budgets, allocation decisions and in building capacity for all types of resources.

WHY IT MATTERS

Collaborative leadership and shared decision-making engages stakeholders in meaningful ways that engender their ability to help communicate and implement the school vision. Not only does this enliven a school community, it lightens all loads and creates an organization structured to work and learn collaboratively at all levels.

Dewey’s words ring as true today as they did in 1907. *What is our vision today for a democratic education that reflects the values of the parents and*

One hundred and nine years ago, educator John Dewey, wrote:

“What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all of its children. Any other ideal for our schools is narrow and unlovely; acted upon, it destroys our democracy.” (Dewey, 1907, p. 3)

community while preparing children for their future in the 21st Century? All successful schools articulate the answer for themselves in the form of a shared vision on which they base their decisions for both the instructional program and the school environment.

If “every organization is perfectly structured to get the results that it gets” (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 8) then educational leaders must intentionally structure a workplace model that reflects exactly what we want for all stakeholders, students most importantly. We want students to have equal opportunities, to be engaged in their learning and to have a sense of belonging to a community. We want staff, students, and parents to work collaboratively, to have agency in shared decisions, and opportunities to develop their own leadership capacity to advance the shared vision in their daily work and without supervision.

Many of the upheavals of the last decade in education policy, funding structures in the so-called age of accountability were initiated or justified by the need to move from a factory model to a new paradigm for the Information Age – the 21st Century. In this “new” world, students’ futures are tied to innovation, collaboration and connectivity are the norm. Businesses realize the need for a similar shift long ago, but unlike the field of education, they did “not just offer incentives for staff to try harder within traditional constraints” (Darling-Hammond, 2010 p. 237). With few exceptions, a parallel transformation in the world of education has simply not occurred despite enormous effort. Paul Hill of the Progressive Policy Institute articulates our collective dilemma:

Today’s public schools system tolerates new ideas only on a small scale and it does so largely to reduce pressures for broader change. The current system is intended to advance individual, community and national goals, but is, in fact, engineered for stability. (Hill, 2006, p. 1)

We need educational leaders, who can overcome the inertia described by Hill and respond to a new set of criteria for a paradigm shift that benefits both professional staff and students. Collaborative (sometimes called collective) leadership offers a new vision and structure to the governance of schools. Hill also finds “encouragement for claims about benefits accruing to students when leadership is more widely distributed in schools” (Louis et al., 2010, p. 29) and indirectly related to student achievement, as well as offering “greater acceptance of jointly-made decisions along with an increased sense of responsibility for and motivation to accomplish organizational goals” (Louis et al., 2010, p. 20).

“Vision is a compelling picture of the future that inspires commitment. It answers the questions: Who is involved? What do they plan to accomplish? Why are they doing this?” (Mendez-Morse, 1993, p. 1). In wrestling with these questions, each school community both creates and shares the vision that lies at the heart of this leadership practice. That vision, like all democratic values, are ideals to be worked towards, with leaders who will clarify and communicate the vision through governance structures that give stakeholders a place and a voice.

To accomplish this, leaders must first be able to weather the instability of the improvement process. In their work Hill and her co-authors investigate some of the most creative and successful organizations in the recent history. They describe their concept of “the paradoxes of collaboration” as that tension in which “innovation emerges most often from the collaboration of diverse people as they generate . . . new ideas through discussion, give and take, and often-heated contention” (Hill, Brandeau, Trulove, & Lineback, 2014, p. 59). Understanding these tensions allow principals to both cultivate and normalize an environment that expects and supports innovation and shared decision-making.

High-Leverage Leadership Practice #4: Principal Growth

EFFECTIVE PRINCIPALS MODEL COMMITMENT TO ONGOING LEARNING TO SUSTAIN AND ENHANCE LEADERSHIP SKILLS THAT IMPROVE INSTRUCTION AS WELL AS THE LEARNING COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE.

WHAT IT IS

When principals adopt a growth mindset to direct their work with staff, students, and the school community, that mindset must also apply to their own development as a leader. This high-leverage leadership practice includes the actions that principals take to learn how to better support organizational learning, maintain resolve and focus, and find solutions in response to challenges. To grow and develop in the principalship, principals must continuously engage in learning opportunities, mentoring or coaching sessions, or professional development (Wiggins, 2012).

STRATEGIES

- Engage in a professional community with peers within the district and county.
- Acquire a coach and/or mentor for him/herself for the purpose of supportive reflection and the continuous improvement of leadership practices.
- Align professional learning provided for and by staff to the quality professional learning standards, and participate fully in those learning opportunities.
- Reflect on his/her own practice and seek guidance from the CPSEL and associated descriptions of practice to establish goals and monitor progress.
- Seek the required training to effectively manage all types of resources.

WHY IT MATTERS

The role of the principal has changed significantly in recent years. School leaders are not only building managers, but also key drivers of the many facets of school improvement. Principals fill a wider variety of roles than ever before, serving as supervisors, instructional leaders, fund-raisers, visionaries, community organizers, data analysts, and change agents (Guilfoyle, 2014).

With so many changes to the role of principal, many site administrators have not been afforded the opportunity to work in the very type of organization they want to create in their school. In their previous roles as a teacher they may not have been a part of a learning community, worked with evidence to determine how to improve instruction, or had many productive years as an instructor. Since you cannot teach what you have not learned, this practice highlights the invaluable and essential need for principals to be respected and valued as a learner in an integrated learning system.

“Despite the expensive investment in principal preparation, selection, and transition, a study conducted by Fuller and Young found that just over 50 percent of newly hired principals stay at a school for three years and less than 30 percent stay to year five” (School Leaders Network, 2014, p. 11). However, “it takes an average of five years to put a mobilizing vision in place, improve the teaching staff, and fully

implement policies and practices that positively impact the schools' performance" (School Leaders Network, 2014, p. 3). Setting aside the financial losses for principal turnover, the loss of stability and progress for staff growth and student achievement has been documented (Beteille, Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2011).

The CPSEL and related Descriptions of Practice (DOP) identify what an administrator must know and be able to do in order to move into sustainable, effective practice (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2014). They also reflect current and emerging expectations for educational leaders. As a result, principals can refer to the CPSEL and DOP to ground, guide, and direct their day-to-day actions.

The original CPSEL were adapted from the national Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) leadership standards developed in 1996 and then revised in 2008 and 2015. The updated (2015) CPSEL are informed by current research studies, policy and practice literature, and state statutes and reflect experiences of California administrators and stakeholders, that together validate the CPSEL content as accurately representing expectations for the work of education leaders. Despite their credibility, they remain an underutilized resource for principal reflection, guidance and growth (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2014, p. 2). This year, CPSEL will be aligned more closely with the California Administrative Performance Expectations used in administrative preparation programs, as the CDE continues its march toward the integrated cohesive and aligned path for all educator development recommended in *Greatness by Design* (California Department of Education, 2012). Thus, the CPSEL will become more broadly understood and used. Further, the DOP illuminates in detail, including competence indicators, exactly how those standards can be enacted. The latest DOP revision was completed in May 2015 and is available at WestEd.com.

High-Leverage Leadership Practice #5: Evidence-Based Decisions

EFFECTIVE PRINCIPALS ENGAGE THE LEARNING COMMUNITY IN EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION MAKING

WHAT IT IS

Decisions based on data and evidence are being made across all areas of human endeavor, including education, to more systematically understand and increase the positive impact of practices on outcomes. Three hallmarks of evidence-based decision-making emerged from research. These are: (1) identify and implement a system that includes steps for collecting and analyzing data, determining needs, and designing, implementing and evaluating changes; (2) collaborate with colleagues; and (3) align decisions with evidence (Boudett, City, & Murname, 2013; Bryk, Gomez, Grunow, & LeMahieu, 2015).

STRATEGIES

- Adopt or construct a system for continuous inquiry into instructional practices for improving student outcomes.
- Inventory all types of available data to determine what data are needed to monitor instruction and student learning.
- Ensure that teachers have opportunities to analyze, query, interpret, and make decisions based on data.
- Inform the school community about initiatives, the evidence leading to change, and the resulting outcomes.

WHY IT MATTERS

The primary work of teachers and principals is to advance student academic learning and social emotional growth. Well-defined learning is guided by standards and goals, and can be measured through multiple assessment tools and data sets that reveal the learning accomplishments and needs of individuals and groups of students. Principals have instructional leadership responsibilities, as indicated in the California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (CPSEL) Standard 2 to, “guide and support the implementation of standards-based curriculum, instruction, and assessments that address student expectations and outcomes” and “to develop and use *assessment and accountability* systems to monitor, improve, and extend educator practice, program outcomes and student learning” (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2014, p. 44). Appropriate, systematic, and continuous use of evidence refines and focuses the work of teachers and principals in improving instruction and the school environment to support more effective student learning.

The strategies associated with this high-leverage practice form a sequence of actions that lead to effective use of data and evidence for decision-making. In addition, these strategies support a collaborative and consistently implemented improvement process. Principals and teachers must recognize that the work of assessment, analysis, and change is never finished (Boudett et al., 2013; Bryk et al., 2015).

Research Methodology

From the onset of this study, the PEP Task Force focused on building a solid research-based foundation for its report, fortified by experiential and anecdotal perspectives of practicing principals. We began by studying *Greatness by Design: Supporting Outstanding Teaching to Sustain a Golden State* (California Department of Education, 2012) in whole, and with particular reference to its description of, and recommendations for principal leadership.

The PEP Task Force applied REEd's continuous improvement process, which is grounded in design thinking processes and improvement science concepts. The team gathered insights through interviewing and surveying current and former principals and other educators. Additional iterations of information gathering were conducted with potential users of the final report and tools at various stages in the process. Additionally, the team applied more typical research strategies to a review of the literature on principal leadership. The collective experience of PEP Task Force members provided a lens through which the team synthesized characteristics of successful schools, high-leverage and realistic principal leadership practices, and implementation strategies for the principal leadership practices.

With the support of colleagues at the California Department of Education and at REEd, we initially identified more than 40 articles and other reports and documents related to principal evaluation, the original focus of the PEP Task Force's study. The team developed a survey, administered to an online database of California school administrators to assess the current and ideal state of principal evaluation, as well as a structured interview process and questions. Shortly after administering the survey and conducting interviews the charge of the PEP Task Force was changed from principal evaluation to principal excellence. The team redirected research efforts to the identification of high-leverage principal leadership practices that build instructional capacity and move student learning forward. With this new lens for the study the team reviewed all of the previous readings and identified and studied additional research reports, articles, and books focused on effective principal practices.

The team applied a systematic process for identification of high-leverage practices and strategies. This process included at least two members of the team reading each identified research report and article, and all team members reading works that were judged as among the best on the initial read. Team members discussed findings and insights from readings with the entire team. These discussions led to development of the Successful Schools Framework and the process for identification of practices and strategies. That process began with individual team members posting practices they had abstracted from the research. Individually identified practices were categorized. Then, through multiple iterations discussion and posting, the final five high-leverage practices were synthesized. These high-leverage practices were confirmed through a reference checking process that looked back at initial readings and sought additional research studies, and through structured interviews of practitioners. A similar iterative process was applied to identify key strategies for implementation of the practices.

This project, as well as parallel projects for teacher evaluation, teacher initiated reform, and others, manifests the California Department of Education vision for "learning system" wherein California educators thrive in a coherent, consistent, aligned and growth-based environment from pre-service to retirement (California Department of Education, 2012). The PEP Task Force regarded IPLS as its prime directive, guiding both process and product towards a tight focus on essential practices underpinned by standards and models that are highly regarded by educators and highly adaptable to all educational

contexts. The high-leverage practices identified in this report are research-based, and aligned with the California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (CPSEL) and their associated Descriptions of Practice. Both are based on the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards for School Leaders that have been extensively vetted.

Throughout the study, we continued to seek insights and feedback from a wide range of practitioners and policy makers, and to broaden our collective knowledge base. Various members of the PEP Task Force:

- participated in state level workgroups to rewrite the Descriptions of Practice for the CPSEL and to create coaching modules for new administrators.
- attended training in Design Thinking, observation protocols, and Learning Focused Conversations.
- planned and attended the “academies” designed for the study of teacher evaluation in both northern and southern California.
- represented the Design Team at the State Steering Committee that advised REEd in its management of the grant supporting this study.
- interviewed principals, teacher leaders, principal supervisors, superintendents, and professors of educational administration to acquire their ideas and receive feedback early in the study as well as after identification of the high-leverage practices and strategies.

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Note: *The PEP Task Force found the sources in **BOLD** to be the most influential to this report.*

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