Getting and staying focused is a challenge for any school leader, whose days and weeks can easily be spent just ensuring the school runs smoothly, without ever focusing on student learning, improvement, or change efforts. However, a study of high-needs, high-performing, “beat-the-odds” schools conducted by McREL researchers (McREL, 2005) found that two of the key characteristics that separated these schools from their lower-performing counterparts were academic press for achievement (high expectations for all students) and shared mission and goals (a clear focus for improvement efforts and resources). In short, these top-performing schools had established and articulated clear goals for learning and then focused their energies and resources on achieving those goals.

That approach may sound obvious, but it’s easy and all too common for schools to fall into a different pattern, one that makes them feel like they’re running in many directions at once without a clear sense of purpose or direction. Consider the following example: Years ago, a team of researchers encountered a school where the principal—in an effort to do what she thought was best for students—had been relentless in her pursuit of every new funding opportunity and program she could find. She had sent her teachers to nearly every professional conference in the city, and filled her school with computers, books, and other tools. But in the end, none of the “stuff” did what it was supposed to do: raise student achievement. The efforts were fragmented and incoherent and did little to strengthen the core of the school. As a result, the teachers were consumed with activity, but not focusing on what matters most. Strong school leaders, in contrast, cut through the clutter by establishing challenging goals and performance targets, which they use to focus people on doing what matters most—and only what matters most (Public Impact, 2008).

In light of these studies and observations, it’s not surprising, then, that one of the responsibilities of school leaders we found strongly correlated with student achievement was to have clear goals. Figure 2.1 shows this responsibility and the related classroom and school practices.

**FIGURE 2.1**
Leadership Responsibility and Practices to Focus Schools on Clear Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Classroom and School Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus:</strong> Establishes clear goals and keeps those goals in the forefront of the school’s attention</td>
<td>• Establishes high, concrete goals and expectations that all students meet them&lt;br&gt;• Establishes high, concrete goals for curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices within the school&lt;br&gt;• Establishes high, concrete goals for the general functioning of the school&lt;br&gt;• Continually keeps attention on established goals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Art Costa, Professor Emeritus, California State University, Sacramento, CA, and Bena Kallick, Institute for Habits of Mind, Westport, CT
Explore ways to teach students to be skillful thinkers who know how to collaborate and communicate and to align curriculum with those purposes in mind. Learn how to work with teachers, parents, and the community to value and teach dispositional thinking.
Materials Fee $30 for Dispositions: Reframing Teaching and Learning
Registration Code PD16GA001

Developing Instructional Leaders
Wil Parker, Bowie State University, Bowie, MD, and Wagner Marseille, Lower Merion School District, Ardmore, PA
Get proven insights on how school leaders create courageous conversations on teacher and leader behaviors and build an effective systematic approach to increase student learning.
Registration Code PD16GA002

Designing Rich Performance Tasks to Assess What Matters Most
Jay McTighe, McTighe & Associates Consulting, Columbia, MD
Dig deep into examples of rich performance tasks that assess understanding and transfer and integrate 21st century skills with subject area content. Review a set of practical and proven frameworks, and then preview Internet resources that support effective task and rubric design.
Materials Fee $25 for The Understanding by Design Guide to Advanced Concepts in Creating and Reviewing Units
Registration Code PD16GA003

GENERAL SESSIONS

OPENING GENERAL SESSION
Friday, October 30, 2015
The Right-Now Principal: Becoming a 21st Century Leader
Heidi Hayes Jacobs, Curriculum Designers Inc., Rye, NY

SECOND GENERAL SESSION
Saturday, October 31, 2015
Passionate Leadership: The Five Essential Elements That Transform School Culture and Performance
Cheryl Atkinson, Principal Founder, TCA Consulting, LLC, Topeka, KS

SPECIAL EVENTS

• Making Connections Welcome Reception
• Networking Breakfasts
• Debriefing Sessions
DAY ONE
Session Highlights

Leveraging the Power of Teacher Rounds
Katherine C. Boles and Vivian Troen, Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA
Discover how to bring the model of professional learning known as Teacher Rounds directly into the world of teacher practice.

How to Give Effective Feedback to Teachers
Robyn Jackson, Mindsteps Inc., Washington, DC
Learn how to provide the kind of feedback that matters. Learn what types of feedback motivate teachers every day and help them get better.

Yo! We’re Not in Kansas Anymore! (Urban Dictionary Example of “Resilience”)
Elle Allison-Napolitano, Wisdom Out, Oakland, CA
Immerse yourself in this unique visual simile that uses the Wizard of Oz to help explain the characteristics of leaders who are highly resilient. Discover what it takes to respond to leadership challenges with grit, grace, and, of course, courage.

Educators as Social Networked Learners
Jackie Gerstein, Boise State, Walden, American InterContinental, and Western Governors’ Universities
Explore collaborative and emergent pedagogies and tools related to the use of social networks in learning environments. Get hands-on experience with social networking tools and stretch the boundaries that let you use social networking to your advantage.

DAY TWO
Session Highlights

Building Capacity in New and Aspiring Leaders
Jennifer Abrams, Jennifer Abrams Consulting, Palo Alto, CA
Using research and examples from several countries, as well as many national organizations and districts, this session presents rubrics and recommendations for supporting the growth of aspiring leaders.

By the Standards: Evaluate More, Assess Less, and Grade for Learning
Chad Prather, Pearl-Cohn High School, Nashville, TN, and Justin Montenegro, Hume-Fogg Academic Magnet High School, Nashville, TN
If you’ve been wondering how to apply standards-based grading, this session is for you. Explore the benefits, address the criticisms, and unpack the processes so that you can effectively use it with your students.

Leading FIT Teaching™
Douglas Fisher, Health Sciences High and Middle College, San Diego, CA
Explore how the FIT Teaching strategies from ASCD—focused on building school culture and leading high-quality instruction, intervention, and assessment—ensure students learn at high levels.

Leadership Practices That Ensure Schoolwide Literacy Achievement for All
Regie Routman, ASCD Author, National Teacher and Leader, Seattle, WA
Reading is cool! Learn how to create and sustain a collaborative school culture that supports reading so that students can improve reading and writing engagement and achievement.

DAY THREE
Session Highlights

Collegiate Academic Coaches: The Key to Dropout Prevention and High School Retention
Mary Charles, Loyola University, Chicago, IL
Get the details of a fascinating program at Loyola University Chicago that has paired college students, who are professionally trained as academic coaches, with at-risk high school freshmen. This coaching has lowered dropout rates and yielded statistically significant academic results.

Function Before Tool: Effectively Integrating Technology in the Classroom
Alex Gonzalez, Health Sciences High & Middle College, San Diego, CA
Discover how new technologies—including Web 2.0, social media, apps, and cloud-based learning—provide new opportunities for purposeful teaching and learning. Master the technology that can help prepare teachers for lesson planning and classroom management.

Closing the Achievement Gap: Transforming Schools for Excellence
Tiffany Anderson, Jennings School District, Jennings, MO
Take a close look at the strategies high-performing schools use to eliminate achievement gaps, improve instruction, and promote a culture of excellence that ensures sustainable high performance for the student base.

New Narratives for School Media Centers: Literacy, Technology, and Cultural Change
Wilma Kurvink, Wesley College, Melbourne, Australia
Get a firsthand account of how a school replaced their traditional libraries with purpose-built learning zones for 21st century students. Get details on the strategies, planning, and the final redesign that enabled this bold experiment.

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