

2ND
EDITION

PERSONAL QUALITIES

EFFECTIVE LEADERS

SCHOOL CLIMATE

QUALITIES OF
**EFFECTIVE
PRINCIPALS**

PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE

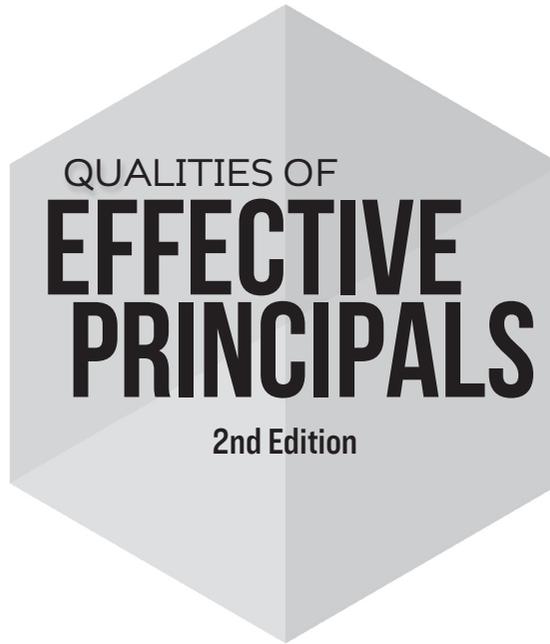
ADMINISTRATIVE SKILLS

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

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Preface

Do principals factor into student success? In *Qualities of Effective Principals, 2nd Edition*, we answer this question with a resounding yes! In fact, among school factors, the effect of principals is considered second only to that of teachers in facilitating student learning (Karadag, 2020; Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). Consequently, principals are expected to promote and develop the school vision, empowering stakeholders to build and maintain the conditions necessary for the success of all students. High-quality schools are characterized by high-quality principals. Without question, an effective principal is the key to a successful school and principals are responsible for the overall functioning of their school. In their managerial role, they oversee the daily operations of schools. As instructional leaders, they direct and supervise the development, execution, assessment, and improvement of educational programs and activities in their schools. Principals' practices influence school conditions, teacher quality, instructional quality, and student achievement. Without world-class principals, there will be no world-class schools. The 21st century has seen an array of tasks—school safety, crisis management, understanding and accommodating for multicultural diversity, marketing, public relations, grantsmanship, data management, and technology—being added to the repertoire of the principalship (Siegrist, Weeks, Pate, & Monetti, 2009).

So, what makes great principals great? The nature of the principal's role has changed significantly in the past three decades, from primarily managerial to that of leading through quality instructional guidance and managerial responsibilities (Boyce & Bowers, 2018; Valentine & Prater, 2011). Despite the recent emphasis on instructional leadership, principals remain responsible for traditional duties such as facility management, budgeting, school safety, and student discipline—tasks that continue to absorb a considerable amount of their time (Çelebi, Peker, & Selçuk, 2020; Urick, 2016). Indeed, contemporary principals fulfill a wide array

of responsibilities. Principals apply combinations of value-informed organizational, personal, and task-centered strategies in response to careful diagnosis of situations or people they are trying to influence (Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016). In other words, principal effectiveness is highly contextual.

Considering the increasing number of responsibilities required of principals, it is not surprising to find that long hours are spent on the job. School principals work an average of 59 hours per week (Lavigne, Shakman, Zweig, & Greller, 2016). Although it is generally agreed that the principal's role has evolved in recent years, there is no clear definition of that role and no method to balance the responsibility of instructional leadership with the myriad and important other demands on their time (Fullan & Pinchot, 2018; Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, & Gundlach, 2003). Given the competing demands for precious time, it is imperative not only that principals do their work well, but also that they do the right work. And to this end, effective principals understand that the core business of school is teaching and learning.

One essential ingredient for success in education or any business, for that matter, is effective leadership. If we are to succeed as an educational enterprise in a highly competitive world, then we must embrace leadership development—not in a cursory fashion, but rather in an ongoing, comprehensive, sustained manner. It is for this purpose—leadership development—that we have written *Qualities of Effective Principals, 2nd Edition*. We hope you find it of value to your organization and your leadership team.

Conceptual Framework for the Book

The framework for *Qualities of Effective Principals, 2nd Edition* is provided in Figure P.1, which outlines eight key qualities for understanding and prioritizing the principal's work. These qualities, based on a thorough literature review on school and leadership effectiveness, capture well the essence of the principal's work.

Each quality serves as the basis of discussion for the eight chapters included in Part I. Additionally, the style and format by which we present the findings are designed to be user-friendly, providing easy-to-use summaries of literature.

Qualities of Effective Principals, 2nd Edition, relies heavily on the most current research we could identify, although we also include applicable policy and theoretical perspectives throughout the book. Specifically, the sources considered in creating this synthesis of principal effectiveness

include empirical studies of principal practice as linked to student achievement, case studies of principals, meta-analyses of principal effectiveness, and other reviews of research related to the work of the principal.

FIGURE P.1
Qualities of Effective Principals

Principal Quality	Description
Quality 1: Instructional Leadership	The principal fosters the success of all students by facilitating the development, communication, implementation, and evaluation of a shared vision of learning that reflects excellence.
Quality 2: School Climate	The principal fosters the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a positive and safe school climate for all stakeholders.
Quality 3: Human Resource Administration	The principal fosters effective human resources administration through the selection, induction, support, and retention of quality instructional and support personnel.
Quality 4: Teacher Evaluation	The principal conducts meaningful, timely, and productive evaluations of teachers and other staff members to support ongoing performance effectiveness and school improvement.
Quality 5: Organizational Management	The principal fosters the success of all students by supporting, managing, and overseeing the school's organization, operation, and resources.
Quality 6: Communication and Community Relations	The principal fosters the success of all students by collaborating effectively with all stakeholders.
Quality 7: Professionalism	The principal fosters the success of all students by demonstrating integrity, fairness, and ethical behavior.
Quality 8: The Principal's Role in Student Achievement	The principal leads the school in a manner that results in acceptable, measurable progress based on established standards.

The research findings and recommended practices identified in *Qualities of Effective Principals, 2nd Edition*, should be familiar to many school leaders. For effective principals, the book should serve as a review and

reminder for continued improvement. For developing school leaders, the same findings serve to build awareness as they take steps to enhance their effectiveness. By focusing on principal effectiveness, our ultimate goal is to improve the educational experiences and achievement of the students we serve in our schools.

Organization of the Book

Qualities of Effective Principals, 2nd Edition, is designed to serve as a resource and reference tool for school leaders and their supervisors. It identifies elements of effective leadership within eight broad categories and points readers interested in further exploration to the research studies and reviews used in the preparation of the text. The book is divided into two parts:

- Part 1 provides a research synthesis useful in developing a profile of what an effective principal should know and be able to do.
- Part 2 contains checklists for principal effectiveness, along with quality indicators and red flags that are tied to the eight identified qualities.

In **Part 1**, the first seven chapters address major aspects of a principal's job responsibilities and practices. In the final chapter, we turn our attention to the impact of principals on the ultimate goal of leadership—student success. Within each chapter, information is organized into categories of characteristics or behaviors that are supported by existing research on important aspects of principal effectiveness. Summaries of research are provided in a straightforward manner in each chapter.

In **Part 2**, we provide checklists to assess principal skills, quality indicators to look for in effective principal performance, and red flags for inappropriate or ineffective principal performance. This portion of the book focuses on helping principals apply the qualities of effectiveness to improve—whether the improvement is self-diagnosed or the result of supervisor assistance. In particular, the checklists and qualities should be helpful in converting research findings into more effective practice.

How the Book Can Be Used

By identifying and carefully considering the attributes of high-quality leadership, we can be better equipped to identify links between leadership processes and desirable school and student outcomes. Thus, *Qualities of Effective Principals, 2nd Edition*, is aimed at improving the quality of principal performance and the learning community in which principals

work. In this effort, the book can be a valuable resource for the following audiences:

- Principals and assistant principals who desire to improve their own performance through analysis and reflective practice.
- Administrators who supervise and evaluate principals and assistant principals.
- Staff development specialists who plan and deliver training focused on improving school leadership.
- Leadership coaches who are facilitating the learning and professional growth of principals and assistant principals.
- Human resource specialists who are responsible for recruiting and selecting high-quality principals and assistant principals.
- Professors of educational leadership who can employ the book's research synthesis in their leadership programs.
- Policymakers and their staffs who are responsible for developing tools and strategies for state or district leadership development programs and processes.

For any user of the book, we attempt to make clear that, beyond safety, there are only two things that really count in schools and school leadership—teaching and learning, and supporting teaching and learning. And it is to these ends that we hope you find *Qualities of Effective Principals, 2nd Edition*, beneficial.

1

Instructional Leadership: Supporting Best Practice

Beth entered the education profession as a middle school science teacher who wanted to make a difference in the lives of her students. After teaching for a number of years, she wanted to accomplish more than the work that she could do solely within her classroom and, thus, became a grade-level chair. Beth also worked on the district's science curriculum committee and then began taking classes at the university at night to earn her administration and supervision license. Beth was an outstanding teacher, and her first administrative position as the assistant principal for instruction seemed tailor-made for her strengths. Her instructional expertise and knowledge of curriculum provided her with a sound foundation for leading instructional efforts in her school. Beth's office walls looked like a strategic command center of data disaggregation and data tracking. She traveled through classrooms daily, observing instruction and student learning. Her observations helped her identify classroom needs and strengths. She collaborated regularly with grade-level teams and directly with teachers to monitor the needs of students and to determine strategies and resources that could better support students and teachers. And she continued to meet with students to talk about their education goals and progress. In essence, Beth is committed to making teaching and learning in her school the most positive experience it can be. And the most successful!

In the first quarter of the 21st century, a major emphasis in the educational arena has been on preparing our students with a broad set of knowledge, skills, work habits, and character traits that are critically important to success in today's world, particularly in collegiate programs and modern careers (Ark & Schneider, 2014). In the United States, national and state expectations require schools to ensure that all students achieve mastery of core curriculum and learning objectives. As a result, leading instructional efforts in a school has evolved into an even more

important and primary role for school principals than in decades past. Principals must focus on teaching and learning—especially in terms of measurable student progress—to a greater degree than before.

Instructional leadership matters not only in addressing the challenges associated with national and state expectations but also, and even more important, in achieving longer-term aims for student career and life outcomes. Principals play a leading role in creating engaging opportunities for students to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to thrive in an information economy and in diverse communities. Schools constitute an open system that is strongly influenced by their environment. Essentially, schools are a microcosm of their communities. The global/local economy and society in the 21st century require younger generations not only to achieve academic success, career preparation, or civic engagement but also to achieve a combination of all of these.

Consequently, today's principals concentrate on building a vision for their schools; establishing learning communities; and ensuring the quality of curriculum, instruction, and assessment that are implemented in the school building with an eye on what is as well as what changes may come. Among other responsibilities, accomplishing these essential school improvement efforts requires gathering and analyzing data to determine needs and then monitoring instructional programs to determine if the identified needs are addressed. This chapter summarizes existing research related to instructional leadership and methods principals use to exhibit and harness that leadership to meet their school goals. In particular, we focus on the following key attributes:

- Building and sustaining a school vision.
- Monitoring and supporting instruction.
- Coordinating and supervising curriculum.
- Leading a learning community.
- Using data to make instructional decisions.

Building and Sustaining a School Vision

If you are not sure where you want to go, how will you ever get there? Furthermore, how will you know when and how to take corrective action along the way? And how will you know when you've arrived at your destination? A successful principal must have a clear vision that shows how all components of a school will operate at some point in the future. Having a clear image of their schools helps principals avoid becoming consumed by the trivial requirements of their jobs. Fulfilling these multiple

responsibilities well requires principals to possess an inner compass that consistently points them toward the future interests of the school, never losing sight of their schools' visions, missions, and goals.

Setting the Vision and Direction

Leadership is anchored in two core functions: *providing direction* and *exercising influence* (Huff et al., 2011; Louis, et al., 2010). Principals are in a vital leadership position and serve as the catalyst for orchestrating change for continuous improvement across the school (González-Falcón, García-Rodríguez, Gomez-Hurtado, & Carrasco-Macías, 2020). They set direction for a compelling and attainable future, communicate that big picture clearly, and inspire—rather than dictate—others to take actions to achieve the vision.

In other words, principals chart a direction and influence others to stay the course to meet organizational goals. Principals also foster the success of all students by facilitating the development, communication, implementation, and evaluation of a shared vision of learning that reflects excellence. Further, effective principals demonstrate an ongoing concern with schoolwide vision, purpose, mission, and goals while constantly working to motivate constituents to accept and commit to school improvement and success. They strive to pull the system together in a synergic effort, rather than letting it operate as segmented, individual entities with missions and goals that may not support, and may even detract from, schoolwide concerns (Ninković & Florić, 2018).

Although this description sounds somewhat academic, it remains the reality for the day-to-day functioning of good principals. Moreover, these good principals know that vision counts. No vision means no success. Thus, effective principals embrace the fundamental importance of setting and sustaining a clear vision. This, then, translates into what they do every day in their role of primary instructional and learning leader for their schools, prioritizing student achievement and effective instructional practices as the foremost goals of the school.

Implementing the Vision and Getting Buy-In

It isn't just the principal's vision that counts. Rather, effective, forward-thinking principals understand the significance of building a shared vision and creating high-performance expectations (Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Kearney & Herrington, 2010). They also understand that if a vision is to reach fruition, it must be appropriate, relevant, and compelling enough to be embraced by others within the school and extend to the total school

community. It must become a shared vision (Huff et al., 2011; Kouzes & Posner, 2002). In this regard, principals identify, articulate, and endorse visions of exemplary instructional practices and model those beliefs in decision making (Ash & Hodge, 2016).

In plain language, effective principals put action behind their words. They communicate and implement the vision by identifying specific long-term and short-term goals. They also need to be knowledgeable about planning processes, and they must be able to monitor initiatives and take corrective action. They promote the use of data to monitor and evaluate the realization of the vision. Further, they steward the vision and fend off distractions when things get in the way of accomplishing priorities. In this regard, they stand as a barrier to keep out negative influences and to keep in a keen focus on what is most important—student success. Thus, they understand that when students succeed, schools succeed.

Several years back, Starratt (1995) visualized the school organization as an onion—a simile that still holds true today. At the core of this school onion are the beliefs, assumptions, goals, and myths that form the source of the vision. The outer layers are composed of policies (the basic rules governing organizational behavior), programs (the division of the school's work into departments, grade levels, and offices), organization (the distribution of resources through budgets, schedules, and staffing), and operation (the visible work of classroom teaching and learning). To enable the school to function as a holistic organization, principals reach to the core qualities of the organization since those attributes determine what the organization is, and then those core qualities become highly transferrable in virtually all layers of organizational functioning.

To accomplish this “whole onion” model, beginning with the core, principals nurture shared norms, values, beliefs, and attitudes, and they promote mutual caring and trust among all members of the school community (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). They facilitate the members' accomplishment of shared goals but also address individual concerns. They must understand the importance of human aspects of school changes and reforms. Indeed, research shows that a principal's leadership is significantly related to the reduction of teacher resistance to change, in particular on the emotional and behavioral dimensions (Park & Jeong, 2013; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015a, 2015b). A strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values is an element of teachers' buy-in and motivation, which in turn influences their commitment to change (Lee & Min, 2017; van Veen, Slegers, & van de Ven, 2005). Effective principals understand that if teachers don't see the value in proposed changes, they are less likely to make them happen. Therefore, effective

schools have principals who build among the faculty and staff a sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness to the vision. These issues of mission and values seem abstract, but in reality, there is little that is more practical and vital to real, lasting school improvement than this visioning role of the principal.

Stewarding the Vision

Successful principals understand that it is important to establish clear learning goals and garner schoolwide—and even communitywide—commitment to these goals. Principals of high-achieving schools consistently emphasize the development of a clear vision and goals for learning (Bryant, Ko, & Walker, 2018). They hold high expectations that teachers and students will meet these goals and hold themselves accountable for the school's success. Effective principals also provide emotional support for teachers and are viewed as possessing the ability to foster positive interpersonal relationships. They protect instructional time, including in practical ways, such as by limiting loudspeaker announcements and scheduling building maintenance to minimize disruptions. They ensure that student progress is monitored through the regular aggregation and disaggregation of student performance data that are directly related to the school's mission and goals. Additionally, principals of high-achieving schools are confident that they will accomplish their school's vision and goals despite challenges and setbacks; thus, they lead by example and build the school's collective efficacy (Goddard, Goddard, Sook Kim, & Miller, 2015; Versland & Erickson, 2017).

When milestone achievements are reached, those results are celebrated. When students succeed, everyone succeeds! Following is a simple illustration of vigilance in stewarding the vision and a determined focus on what matters most:

If student success truly is *the* focus in an elementary school—for example, helping 1st graders learn to read adeptly, developing enjoyment of reading for all students, building a solid foundation for understanding math, developing healthy habits for exercise—then anything that interferes with achieving these goals needs to be eliminated.

What if the maintenance department is mowing the grass directly outside the 4th grade classroom when students are taking an important exam and it's distracting the students? You intervene quickly and find a way to reschedule the lawn mowing. What if there are so many PA announcements that four to six minutes of actual class time were lost every morning? You cut down the announcements to a bare minimum and find other ways to communicate any needed information. What if a series of walk-through observations finds that a regular practice in 5th grade is

to stop teaching about five minutes before the end of class and have students pack up and “talk quietly”? You discuss this matter with the involved teachers and get them to refocus their time to take advantage of all the teachable minutes.

These are pretty simplistic examples, but these “what ifs” happen every day in every school and, in some ways, are simply part of the ebb and flow of schooling. However, if student success really is the focus, the best school leaders know that every opportunity lost is one that can’t be regained, and every opportunity taken is one more small step toward excellence for each classroom and each student. Thus, in the best schools—the most successful schools and classrooms—effective principals make it an overriding habit to make the school a good place to be *and* a good place to learn. They know that converting strategic plans, missions, goals, and so forth is accomplished by converting concepts into real practices, one step at a time. This is vigilance and focus.

Key Research Findings

- Visionary principals have a basic sense of self-confidence and optimism that they personally can have a positive impact on people, events, and organizational achievements (Hallinger, Hosseingholizadeh, Hashemi, & Kouhsari, 2018).
- Setting direction through development of an inspirational shared vision and academic mission is a core practice in successful school leadership (Sun & Leithwood, 2015a).
- In one influential study, schools categorized as high performing (beyond what their socioeconomic composition predicted) were all led by principals who clearly articulated vision, mission, and goals that emanated from personal beliefs about student learning. Conversely, schools that achieved lower than what their socioeconomic standing indicated had principals who did not clearly identify personal beliefs or vision for the school (Mombourquette, 2017).
- High-achieving schools have principals who communicate a vision that is guided by an educational philosophy based on sound research, personal experience, and reflection (Gulcan, 2012; Mombourquette, 2017; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008).
- Effective principals act as change agents; they capitalize on external accountability and reform demands to translate them into enabling conditions—such as through shaping the school’s discourse around achievement and sharply defining goals of student learning (Ganon-Shilon & Schechter, 2019; Shaked & Schechter, 2017).
- Effective principals are change agents and institutional entrepreneurs who initiate and lead meaningful innovations in their organizational and pedagogical environments. They actively and willingly challenge

the status quo (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003; Yemini, Addi-Raccah, & Katarivas, 2015).

- Principals of high-achieving schools communicate the school's priorities to all stakeholders, and they ensure an alignment among the school's vision, mission, and strategic plan (Ash & Hodge, 2016; Mombourquette, 2017).

Transformational Leadership Versus Instructional Leadership

In the principalship literature, there always seems to be a distinction between two leadership styles: transformational leadership versus instructional leadership.

Transformational leadership, in general terms, has come to mean a leadership model that focuses on how leaders influence, inspire, and empower their staff. Some core ideas of transformational leadership include building vision, providing individual support, providing intellectual stimulation, modeling best practices, demonstrating high expectations, creating a positive school culture, and developing structures to foster teachers' participation (Bass, 1985; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Vanblaere & Devos, 2016).

Instructional leadership has a more direct focus on the core business of schooling—teaching and learning. Instructional leaders focus their efforts and work on coordinating, monitoring, and evaluating curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Instructional leaders are expected to have a deep understanding of the tenets of high-quality instruction, actively interact with teachers, and provide support for teachers such as through offering useful feedback (Marks & Printy, 2003; Vanblaere & Devos, 2016). In essence, this is the functional, day-to-day side of leading.

Many studies have compared these two leadership styles, but they haven't reached a consensus on which is better, if we should want or need to choose. A newer and, in our view, better trend is to look at the two styles holistically rather than dichotomously. The practices implied in these two models are intertwined in real life. New evidence shows that effective leading comprises practices from both paradigms (e.g., Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016).

So, which is more important? This is a trick question in that the correct answer seems to be both. When transformational leading works hand-in-hand with functional instructional leading, the school wins!

Monitoring and Supporting Instruction

High-quality instruction means high-quality learning; thus, a prime role—maybe *the* prime role—of effective principals is to support effective teaching. What does instructional leadership look like? It includes a range of activities including, among other key responsibilities, coordinating curriculum, improving the instructional program, staffing the instructional program, supervising and evaluating teaching, monitoring student learning,

and buffering staff from distractions to their work (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). Research on high-performing schools shows that school leaders influence student learning indirectly by reinforcing and supporting teacher efforts to achieve high expectations for students (Woods & Martin, 2016). They don't merely talk about influencing learning; their actions support learning with practical steps such as allocating instructional resources—materials, staffing, and staff development—based on identified needs (Kearney & Herrington, 2010). In fact, a primary channel for principal influence is through the administration, support, and working conditions provided to the teaching force.

Mandating an instructional focus isn't enough. In fact, the best principals roll up their sleeves and get involved in the work of teaching and learning. Thus, their role seems to be much less “do as I say” and much more “do as I do.” They support instructional activities and programs by modeling expected behaviors, participating in staff development, and consistently prioritizing instructional concerns on a day-to-day basis. Additionally, they strive to protect instructional time by removing issues that would distract teachers from their instructional responsibilities (Harris, Jones, Cheah, Devadason, & Adams, 2017). Moreover, principals in effective schools are involved in instruction and work to provide resources that keep teachers focused on student achievement. They also are knowledgeable about curriculum and instruction and promote teacher reflection about instruction and its effect on student achievement (Lochmiller, 2016).

Credibility and Involvement in Instruction

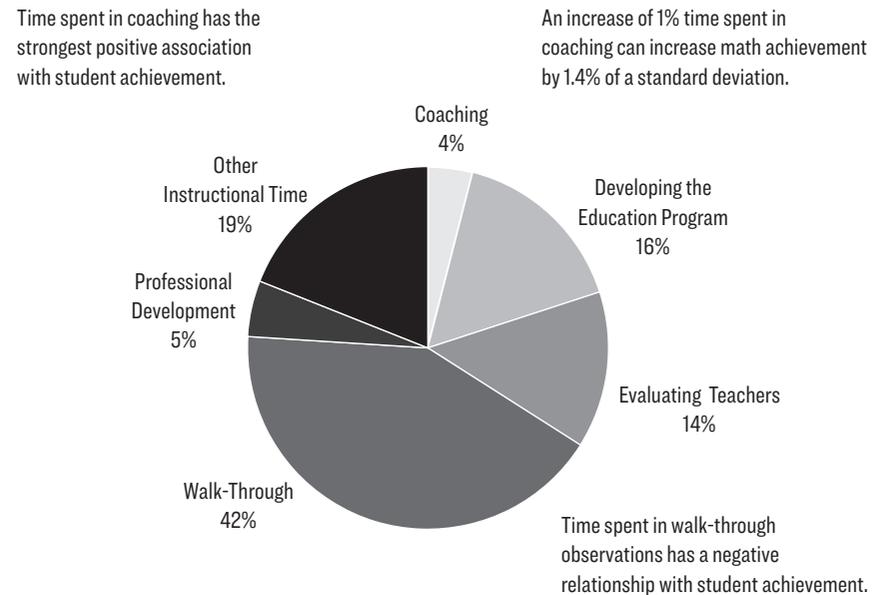
The instructional capacity of a school is built and maintained when the school's principal and teachers engage in frequent conversations about teaching and learning (Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Thoonen, Slegers, Oort, Peetsma, & Geijsel, 2011). This seems so simple but still remains true. If we want to improve instruction, then we must focus on it—and talk about it early and often. Indeed, successful principals have a deep knowledge of the art and science behind teaching and learning, and they keep their finger on the pulse of the quality of instruction that is going on in the building. (If principals don't know good instruction, how can they help improve, support, or monitor it?) Consequently, effective principals understand teaching and possess credibility in the eyes of their staff (Halling, 2018).

Too often and for too many reasons, close scrutiny of instruction just doesn't happen, with reasons varying across issues such as a lack of time, lack of expertise, lack of meaningful incentives for improvement, or a dysfunctional culture. However, effective leaders make it a central task to

organize and manage the instructional program. They monitor student progress and look for evidence that curriculum standards are taught, by reviewing formative assessments, grade books, team lesson logs, and student work. They also encourage teachers to reflect on instructional practices and focus on their impact on student achievement (Mette, Range, Anderson, Hvidston, & Nieuwenhuizen, 2015; The Wallace Foundation, 2011).

Research indicates that the ways in which principals spend their time is associated with changes in student achievement. More specifically, research shows that principals spend only about 13 percent of their work time on instructional activities (more information on this in Chapter 5). Viewing this portion of time more closely under the lens of instructionally related behaviors, the 13 percent of total time allocated to instructionally related activities is allocated to the subcategories illustrated in Figure 1.1.

FIGURE 1.1
How Do Principals Spend Instructionally Related Time?



Source: Data from "Effective Instructional Time Use for School Leaders," by J.A. Grissom, S. Loeb, and B. Master, 2013, *Educational Researcher*, 42(8).

Note: A "1 percent increase in classroom walk-through time use is associated with a 0.11 percent of a standard deviation decrease in student math achievement gains in 2007–2008, a 0.25 percent decrease in 2010–2011, and a 0.22 percent of a standard deviation decrease in student math achievement gains in 2011–2012" (Grissom et al., 2013, p. 438).

Brief classroom walk-throughs are the most common activity, accounting for 43 percent of principals' instructionally related time use. Formally evaluating teachers—or performance assessment—accounts for another 14 percent of principals' time on instructionally related activities. Observed principal activity related to professional development planning or execution varies widely across school years and types but averages 5 percent of instructionally related time and 17 percent of time developing the educational program and evaluating the curriculum at their schools (Grissom, Loeb, & Master, 2013).

What is eye-popping is that principals spend only 4 percent of their instructional time coaching teachers to improve their instruction. And guess which of these instructional leadership activities has the strongest relationship with student achievement? Coaching! When principals spend more time coaching teachers, students' achievement growth increases. In other words, it simply isn't enough to visit and observe classrooms; it's what is done *after* the visits (that is, coaching) that really matters! For an additional percentage point of principal time spent coaching, student math achievement increases by about 1.4 percent of a standard deviation. One empirical study on the effect of teacher coaching found coaching has an effect size of 0.49 standard deviations (i.e., an increase of 19 percentile points) on quality of instruction and an effect size of 0.18 standard deviations (i.e., an increase of 7 percentile points) on student achievement (Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan, 2018). If we want results, we need to help teachers change; otherwise, nothing changes.

Interestingly, classroom walk-throughs, though the most common activity, were associated with negative performance outcomes, particularly in high schools (Grissom et al., 2013). This may largely be due to the ways that teachers perceive these activities. Walk-throughs are most effective when they are viewed as opportunities for professional development rather than as principals simply checking up on teachers. Thus, walk-throughs are not beneficial if principals are not using the information in productive ways to support teachers' instructional practices. This doesn't mean principals' presence and visibility around classrooms do not matter. This also doesn't mean that other instructionally related activities are unimportant; in fact, school achievement growth is higher when principals spend time evaluating teachers or developing the educational program. What it does mean, however, is that converting data gathered about teachers through walk-throughs is essential to teacher feedback and coaching.

Providing High-Quality Feedback and Calibrating Instruction

So, if we want better instruction, we need to provide more precise and informative feedback to teachers as a primary means to influence teacher professional learning. Principals support and nurture teacher development by providing specific and actionable feedback. This is more likely to occur when principals exercise the collegiality of leadership. Additionally, principals are in the best position to help teachers improve in areas of weakness and can accomplish this through observations and dialogue that show respect for teachers as professionals (Goddard et al., 2015). In a practical sense, effective principals build a common framework for conversations and discussions of classroom instruction. They gain access to resources, channel those resources toward the priorities of teaching and learning, and employ them with efficiency and fairness (Li, Hallinger, & Ko, 2014).

As part of their involvement in the daily life of the school, effective principals monitor teachers' practices and identify their instructional strengths and weaknesses. They exert high-quality management and accountability (but not in a punitive way) to build teacher professional capacity and maintain a sustained focus on improvement (Li et al., 2014). When staff see principals out and about in the school, and interested in the daily goings-on, they perceive the principal as an engaged and involved instructional leader. At the same time, good principals know when to step back to demonstrate trust; they know it is important to verify that best practices are implemented in classrooms, and they know when to chisel out what is not working (Berliner & Glass, 2014).

Hattie (2015) specifically found that principals who have a high-impact mindset (i.e., focusing on searching out and evaluating evidence of student learning) are more influential on student outcomes. High-impact principals believe their fundamental task is to focus on learning and evaluate the impact of teaching. As such, they are visible, motivated, and involved in the life of the school. Figure 1.2 estimates the effect size of high-impact leadership practices on student achievement.

What Research Says About Teacher Feedback and Mentoring

Teachers need feedback as much as their students so that they can pinpoint any gaps between current and desired performance. High-quality feedback starts by recognizing what the teachers are doing well. It also helps teachers understand the weaknesses—or areas for growth—in their work, identifies the next target or goal in their professional learning trajectory, and supports them to accomplish their growth in teaching effectiveness. Feedback influences teachers' instruction in many positive ways, including by

increasing efficacy and commitment, reducing feelings of isolation, and improving positive perceptions of the instructional climate and leadership (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Richter et al., 2013; Rockoff, 2008). Insightful and precise feedback guides teachers to explore alternative strategies, take new directions, and identify extra resources to tap into as they advance their teaching repertoire. In fact, when teachers receive timely and high-quality feedback, student achievement improves (Garet et al., 2017).

Another major benefit to high-quality teacher feedback and mentoring is that it predicts less teacher migration and attrition, especially for new teachers who are beginning their teaching careers. One study found that when teachers receive supportive communication from school leaders, it reduces the odds of moving to another school by 55 percent to 67 percent and reduces the odds of leaving the teaching profession by 47 percent to 48 percent. In addition, having a mentor decreases the odds of moving to another school by 41 percent to 55 percent and decreases the odds of leaving the teaching profession by 35 percent to 50 percent (Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017).

Principals' skills in providing timely, specific, and actionable feedback to teachers is essential to helping teachers grow as professionals. Changes in instructional practices emerge only when there is a focus on feedback and follow-up. A number of factors can keep principals from providing effective individualized feedback to their teachers. For example, some principals may lack training in facilitating teachers' professional growth outside of their own grade-level and content-area expertise. A lack of content knowledge sometimes leads principals, especially secondary principals, to narrow the focus of the feedback to general pedagogy. In addition, principals may be unable to provide the depth of feedback because of the sheer number of teachers they are required to evaluate and supervise. Also, given the prevalence of online teacher evaluation platforms, principals prioritize typing well-thought-out written feedback over providing frequent verbal feedback or engaging in informal conversations about instruction (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016; Orland-Barak, 2014).

The effect of feedback varies considerably depending on how the feedback is given and received. Feedback that provides goal-oriented cues and reinforcement is more powerful than feedback that lacks concrete information. In summary, providing critical and informative feedback to teachers can have a powerful impact on teachers and their students.

Best Practices in Teacher Feedback and Mentoring

- *Establish trust.* Teachers likely will be unwilling to recognize areas for improvement and engage in a change process without trust. It is important to establish a comfortable, relaxed, and respectful—yet rigorous—learning atmosphere.
- *Effective feedback is targeted and narrow in focus.* Teachers are more receptive to feedback and more inclined to act on it when the guidance is clearly understood and specific activities for improvement are articulated. Avoid general comments and add evidence to support feedback.
- *Concentrate on performance-related issues.* Rather than just saying a certain instructional activity was good or not so good, explain why you

thought it was or wasn't effective. Providing concrete examples and evidence can add clarity and believability. Also, establish a common language and framework for analyzing instruction. For instance, focus on the use of specific practices within the school's or district's instruction framework, curriculum performance standards and rubrics, or a shared vision of good instruction.

- *Establish priorities for the observation and feedback conversation.* Do not overwhelm teachers with too many suggestions or advice. Ask the teacher, "What kind of data would you like for me to collect?" For example, the data can be the cognitive level of teacher questioning, student time on task, teacher-student interactions, the effectiveness of a certain instructional strategy, or other issues that define good teaching practices.
- *Engage teachers in critical self-reflection and invite them to share self-appraisals first.* Allow teachers to reflect on questions such as, "How successful was the lesson?" "How was student interest and behavior?" "What were the main strengths and weaknesses of the lesson?" or "What would you do differently in the future?" Thoughtful self-reflection enables teachers to understand their professional past and present and project into the future.

FIGURE 1.2

Effect Size Estimates of High-Impact Instructional Leaders

Instructional leaders who ...	Mean Effect Size	Percentile Growth
Believe the major role of a principal is to evaluate his or her own impact.	0.91	32
Get everyone in the school working together to know and evaluate their impact.	0.91	32
Build an environment that prioritizes high-impact teaching and learning.	0.40	16
Are explicit with teachers and students about what success looks like.	0.77	28
Set appropriate levels of challenges and never retreat to "just do your best".	0.57	22

Source: Data from "High Impact Leadership," by J. Hattie, 2015, *Educational Leadership*, 71(5), p. 38.

- *Maintain two-way communication and try to draw out teacher responses.* Specific techniques to encourage teacher thought and teacher talk include the following: (1) practice silence and allow longer wait times, (2) ask open-ended questions, (3) ask probing or prompting questions, and (4) ask for clarification of specific issues. More direct and specific feedback can always follow.
- *Look at student assessment data or work together with teachers to understand data.* Present teachers with student work or data on student performance. Then allow teachers to draw their own conclusions about how well their students are mastering the intended learning. This process of unpacking classroom data shifts the feedback focus from teachers' performance to student learning.
- *Balance the review of past performance and future goals.* Conclude the feedback conversation with a summary of primary accomplishments and review one or two areas for professional growth. Facilitate identifying specific strengths, detecting problems, and initiating goal setting. Be prepared to offer specific recommendations for ways to improve performance. In addition, outline applicable strategies for achieving goals, and connect feedback to individualized professional growth planning.
- *Follow up.* Make sure teachers truly “hear” you and agree together on the concrete changes that will be incorporated into their practice. Finally, follow up to ensure desired changes are occurring and to support teachers in making those desired changes.

Key Research Findings

- Effective principals provide teachers with descriptive, relevant, timely, and respectful professional feedback, and the feedback has the right amount of information to move teacher learning forward by identifying next steps in the learning journey (Khachatryan, 2015; Lochmiller, 2016).
- Providing teachers with intellectual stimulation—such as ensuring that faculty and staff are aware of the most current instructional theories and practices or making the discussion of these matters a regular part of the school's culture—is positively associated with teacher self-efficacy (Mehdinezhad & Mansouri, 2016; Waters et al., 2003).
- Effective principals are knowledgeable about current curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices in the school. This knowledge increases teacher perceptions of the principal's credibility and legitimacy as an instructional leader and equips the principal to be a source of assistance (Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Waters et al., 2003).

- Principal leadership behaviors that promote instructional and curriculum improvement are linked to student achievement improvement (Valentine & Prater, 2011).
- Principal leadership has a critical impact on teacher professional learning (i.e., the professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes of educators) and school capacity (i.e., alignment, communication, trust, cooperation) to improve student learning (Lee & Li, 2015; Li & Hallinger, 2014).
- Instead of viewing their evaluation role as contradictory to the role of supporting and developing teachers, effective principals use evaluation to promote reflection, establish a common framework for analyzing instruction, and provide individualized feedback to teachers (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016).
- Effective principals use supervision to help classroom teachers improve their instructional practices. Effective supervision involves frequent and purposeful observation of classroom teaching, ongoing dialogues with teachers about instruction, coaching, collaboration, and ongoing support for classroom teachers in the form of professional development (Lochmiller, 2016).

Coordinating and Supervising Curriculum

To be effective, principals must monitor how the curriculum is taught and participate in how it is developed. They also must establish a process to develop coherence across curricula and then ensure that teachers understand the curriculum and have access to all the tools and resources needed to succeed.

Coherence of Educational Programs

Students learn more when the instructional programming is coherent and well aligned. If the curriculum does not provide clarity on what, how, and when to teach, omission and inconsistencies often arise in the classroom. When there is unevenness in teacher effectiveness within a school—and there usually is—what students learn can depend largely on which teacher they get (Schmoker, 2019). The good news is that principals can make a difference in this “luck of the draw” learning situation.

In one study, Sebastian and Allensworth (2012) examined how principal leadership would explain differences in achievement and instruction between schools. They found that variation in teaching and learning quality is associated with principal leadership through multiple mediators, including professional community, program quality, learning climate, and

ties with parents and community. Although all these attributes are important, the strongest mediator is program quality, which is defined as the quality of professional development and coherence of programs. Therefore, coherence matters!

Once a new program starts, some pertinent questions to answer are these: Is it followed up to ensure that it is working and is embedded in the school's vision? Is there real continuity and interrelatedness among programs in your school? Are curriculum, instruction, and assessment aligned across teachers in the same subject and grade level? Is such alignment observable across grade and course levels in the school? Additionally, are teachers' professional development activities congruent with desired curriculum and instruction? Thus, program coherence—or the degree to which all instructional programs in the school are guided by a common, focused framework of teaching and learning—is crucial to success (Hallinger & Lu, 2014; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012).

Unfortunately, many programs come and go without making an impact. In fact, teachers often find it hard to keep track of the many programs. Or worse, these “innovative” programs consume a great deal of time and energy and then fade out, leaving only staff fatigue and frustration. Principals must be adept at recognizing what works and what doesn't in their schools, and then they must select and deselect among those new programs and practices. Additionally, they must have a keen sense of which innovations they should invest time and effort in, and follow up by implementing those selected programs with fidelity.

Overall, the goal always is to guide the school's resources and processes to reflect a collective focus on improving student outcomes. As part of the process of focusing on what works, principals must be able to use both structural and cultural strategies to achieve greater alignment and coherence among intentions (Hallinger & Lu, 2014). Cultural strategies include values, vision, collaboration, and modeling of desired practices. Structural strategies include goal setting, curricular organization, and accountability systems, such as student assessment and teacher evaluation.

CIA Alignment

The most effective principals have extensive expertise in planning, coordinating, and evaluating curriculum, instruction, and assessment (CIA) programs, which are the technical core of teaching and learning in our schools (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). A misalignment among these three elements can result in fragmentation and confusion for educators and students, whereas CIA alignment brings clarity and maximizes opportunities

for learning. For instance, if an incongruence exists between curriculum and instruction, teachers may not be able to determine the most essential skills and knowledge to teach. If assessment and instruction are misaligned, it would be impossible to make inferences about the quality of teaching and learning since what was taught and learned are not represented in the test items. Also, if an inconsistency exists between the intended curriculum and what will eventually be assessed, a contradictory message would be sent to teachers and students about what concepts and skills are most valued and important.

So, what should effective principals do? Engage teachers collaboratively to ensure alignment among the key elements of CIA. In particular, ensure that the intended or planned curriculum (i.e., the subject- and grade-specific content and skills outlined by content standards), the enacted or taught curriculum (i.e., the content delivered in the teacher's classroom instruction), and the assessed curriculum (i.e., the content to be assessed) are logically and practically considered and connected. Make these connections not just at the system level but also at the levels of individual teachers and classrooms (Glatthorn, Boschee, Whitehead, & Boschee, 2019; Glatthorn, Jailall, & Jailall, 2017; Roach & Bialo, 2018).

Another action that effective principals take is to involve teachers in curriculum mapping meetings, where they discuss what should be taught, why it should be taught, and what the optimal teaching strategies are for the intended learning outcomes. These principals focus with their teachers on what and how students learn and on how to assess what students have learned. Also, they ensure that CIA alignment occurs not only at the horizontal level (e.g., alignment among all classrooms of the same grade level and subject area such that what is taught in one 9th grade math classroom is consistent with the other 9th grade math classes in the building) but also at the vertical level (e.g., logical progression and sequence of content and skills across lessons, courses, or grade levels).

Key Research Findings

- Effective principals ensure continuity in the school instructional program and coordinate activities around school vision (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012).
- Effective principals monitor the implementation of curriculum standards and make sure they are taught (Hallinger, 2018).
- Effective principals use a variety of cultural and structural strategies to achieve and maintain alignment between goals and activities and to

ensure coherence of programs across classrooms, grades, and departments (Hallinger & Lu, 2014).

- Teachers who work in schools characterized by program alignment and coherence have an enhanced sense of organizational commitment and offer more support to students (Hallinger & Lu, 2014).
- Principals with a mindset for program coherence establish a common instructional framework guiding curriculum, teaching, assessment, and learning across subjects, grades, and departments. In addition, they allocate resources such as funding, materials, staff assignments, and time to advance the common instructional framework (Newmann, Smith, Allensworth, & Bryk, 2001; Welton & Robinson, 2015).
- Effective principals ensure that what is in the intended or planned curriculum is aligned to what is actually taught or enacted, and that teaching is aligned to what is assessed. Further, they provide ongoing follow-through to ensure that alignment occurs horizontally and vertically among the school's teachers (Bester & Scholtz, 2012; Hitt & Tucker, 2016).
- Instructional alignment (i.e., alignment of instruction with local, state, or other selected standards) is moderately related to content coverage, pedagogical quality, and student achievement (Polikoff & Porter, 2014).
- Research shows that the alignment among any pair of the three categories of (1) the written curriculum, (2) the taught curriculum, and (3) the tested curriculum can improve student achievement (Squires, 2012).

Leading a Learning Community

Principals who make a difference in student learning understand that when teachers work in isolation, instructional program coherence is compromised. Therefore, they actively engage teachers in the selection, interpretation, and ongoing refinement of common curriculum, instruction, assessment, materials, and resources so all teachers can take ownership of instructional improvement (Newmann et al., 2001; Welton & Robinson, 2015). This is where a learning community comes into play. Effective principals emphasize and communicate that schools are learning communities of reflective practitioners, and they provide plenty of formal and informal opportunities for collaborative learning to take place (Buttram & Farley-Ripple, 2016; Vanblaere & Devos, 2016).

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs): What Works

Professional learning communities (PLCs) have gained considerable momentum in policy, practice, and research in many countries over the past two decades. PLCs provide a more formal and systematic approach to teacher colearning and collective inquiry. A vast body of studies (e.g., Prenger, Poortman, & Handelzalts, 2019; Tam, 2015; Zheng, Yin, & Li, 2019) find that PLCs positively contribute to the following:

- Teacher efficacy
- Enhanced classroom instruction
- Collaborative culture and activity
- Collective focus on student learning
- Deprivatized practice
- Reflective dialogue about teaching
- Student achievement

Despite the proven potential of PLCs, there has been extensive fuzziness around the concept, leading to PLC efforts being poorly implemented. Having teachers meet in small groups doesn't necessarily equate to development of a true professional learning community. According to DuFour (2004), one of the foremost experts on this subject, three key ideas must guide the work of those engaged in PLCs:

- *Ensuring that students learn.* Members work together to define exactly what students must learn, monitor their progress, and provide systematic interventions.
- *A culture of collaboration.* Members collaborate to build knowledge and engage in collective inquiry into best practices.
- *A focus on results.* The effectiveness of PLCs is judged on the basis of results rather than intention.

Slegers, den Brok, Verbiest, Moolenaar, & Daly (2013) also provided a multidimensional framework for understanding PLCs:

- *Personal capacity* refers to teachers' active and reflective construction of knowledge, which implies assessing, critiquing, and adapting personal knowledge.
- *Interpersonal capacity* relates to the ability of people to work together on shared purposes, which contains elements such as shared beliefs and collective responsibility.
- *Organizational capacity* relates to organizational structures that create and maintain sustainable organizational processes for individual and collective learning and improvement. Included in this dimension are resources, structures, and systems such as time, information, and materials. It also encompasses cultural elements related to relationships and school climate (e.g., mutual trust, respect, support, and networks) and stimulating and participative leadership.

We also know from extensive research that principal support and instructional leadership have an important impact on the effectiveness of PLCs (e.g., Hallam, Smith, Hite, Hite, & Wilcox, 2015; Park, Lee, & Cooc, 2019). In other words, PLCs are more likely to be effective when principals help teachers feel comfortable discussing instructional issues, build

a positive learning climate, and support teachers with their decision making surrounding instructional practices.

Simply put, schooling is organized around two key functions: (1) teaching and learning, and (2) organizing for teaching and learning. Thus, it seems clear that school principals need to manage the structures and processes around instruction. Isolation has a negative effect on teachers' professional and personal lives, so effective principals counter isolation by maximizing collaboration among teachers. For example, teachers might form study groups; conduct peer observations; align curriculum standards; review student data; coplan specific lessons; debrief student behavior issues; or discuss one another's experiences, frustrations, or ideas (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2014; Ostovar-Nameghi & Sheikahmadi, 2016).

Principals as Learners

Today's principals must become role models for learning while continually (or at least regularly) seeking tools and ideas that foster school improvement (Trust, Carpenter, & Krutka, 2018). Effective principals make student success pivotal to their work and, accordingly, pay attention to and communicate about curriculum, instruction, and student mastery of learning objectives. Learning needs to occur throughout an organization, and principals need to become participants in the learning process to shape and encourage the implementation of effective learning models in their schools. To illustrate, effective principals don't just arrange for professional development. Rather, they participate in staff training provided by or to their staffs. Additionally, good principals foster the idea of working together as a valuable enterprise because they understand that this kind of collaborative learning community ultimately will build trust, collective responsibility, and a schoolwide focus on improved student learning (Ingersoll, Sirinides, & Dougherty, 2018).

Keeping staff informed about current research and practice and possessing a belief system that schools are learning communities are crucial to school success. Principals use a variety of staff development tools to focus awareness on research-based strategies that facilitate improved instructional effectiveness (Liu & Hallinger, 2018a). In an effort to infuse instructional know-how into beliefs and practices across the entire faculty, principals also need to mobilize teachers' energy and capacities.

All effective principals strive to become a learner among learners. Thus, they support instructional activities and programs by modeling expected behaviors and prioritizing instructional concerns on a daily basis, and

they recognize that curriculum, instruction, and assessment are crucial to the idea of instructional leadership. They are “hands-on,” work with teachers directly in making decisions about curriculum and instruction, and are visible in and around the school (Lochmiller, 2016). As part of their ongoing instructional leadership responsibilities, effective school principals are highly visible through contact and interaction with teachers, students, and parents, thus promoting the concept of a learning community (Vanblaere & Devos, 2016). When professional development is provided, the best principals don’t disappear; they are front and center as partners.

Teachers as Learners

Teachers need to expand their knowledge of subject content, research-based teaching strategies, assessment, and classroom management on an ongoing basis if they are to meet the diverse learning needs of students. Though the belief in and best efforts for professional development are genuine, the results are too often disappointing. A study by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (2014) found that \$18 billion is spent annually on professional development, and a typical teacher spends about 68 hours per year on professional learning activities—often mandated by the school or school district. When self-guided professional learning and courses are included, total annual professional development time is about 89 hours. However, teachers believe that too many professional development offerings are ineffective. Here are a few sobering facts about professional development from a study by The New Teacher Project (2015):

- Districts are investing as much as \$18,000 per teacher per year in teacher improvement.
- Teachers spend about 10 percent of their school year on development, yet only 3 in 10 demonstrate substantial improvement.
- Teachers feel their professional development is not tailored to their development needs or teaching context.

Indeed, professional development is likely to be ineffective if it is not related to teachers’ specific content and pedagogy, if it is insensitive to individual differences among teachers, or if it lacks specificity and intensity. A host of other factors can compromise the effect of professional development, including insufficient hands-on practice and feedback, little or no follow-up, not enough time built into teachers’ schedules for development, and not enough time and training built into school leaders’ administrative tasks to support teacher learning (e.g., Darling-Hammond, Hyler, Gardner, & Espinoza, 2017).

Professional development is effective when it involves active learning techniques. It should be relevant, hands-on or scenario based, interactive and energizing, and delivered by someone who understands teachers. Professional development that is content specific is more likely to be effective. In other words, effective professional development programs tend to focus directly on classroom-based knowledge and practice, including the subject content, how students learn that content, and the use of effective pedagogical methods. Adult learning research suggests that teachers learn best when they actively choose learning activities based on interest and their own classroom experiences and needs. Consequently, effective principals allow teachers a voice in setting their own professional goals and determining the strategies to use to reach the goals, and they provide teachers with autonomy and resources to work together to achieve success (Rodman, 2018).

We focus so much attention on differentiating instruction for our diverse students, but we don't treat teacher development the same way. Teachers prefer highly personalized learning experiences, such as working with peers and mentors or attending conferences of their choice that are germane to the teachers' instructional assignments and responsibilities. Our teachers simply don't develop with a one-size-fits-all approach; thus, specificity and personalization matter (The New Teacher Project, 2015). In contrast to generic sit-and-listen lectures, active learning that involves the use of authentic artifacts or video lessons can contextualize the learning to teachers' classrooms and their students.

Teachers prefer to plan and implement new practices, analyze student work and data, and reflect after collaborating with other professionals. When they are actively engaged in a learning community, they tend to have greater confidence and enhanced enthusiasm for change and improvement (Sun, Penuel, Frank, Gallagher, & Youngs, 2013; Vangrieken, Meredith, Packer, & Kyndt, 2017). A study by Akiba and Liang (2016) found that teacher-centered collaborative activities to learn about mathematics teaching and learning (e.g., teacher collaboration and informal communication) is more effective at improving student achievement in math than development programs that do not involve in-depth collaboration (e.g., university courses, traditional one-time professional development programs, and individual learning activities).

Critical factors that may directly affect the success of professional development include the level of support provided by the school and district; the culture of learning within the school; and the provision of sufficient time, facilities, and materials. Follow-up and feedback were found to be essential components of sustaining the impact of development

programs. Additionally, effective professional development uses modeling and coaching so teachers can go beyond a conceptual understanding of new practices and concretely visualize what they would look like in their own classrooms.

News flash: Research indicates that teachers who receive substantial high-quality in-service professional development can help students achieve more (Boyd et al., 2011; Fischer et al., 2018). High-quality professional development features an explicit focus on subject content and pedagogy, in-depth active learning, extended duration, coherence, and collective participation (Burke, Aubusson, Schuck, Buchanan, & Prescott, 2015; Desimone & Pak, 2017; Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002). Professional development can take a variety of forms, including taught courses, in-school training, coaching, mentoring, clinical supervision, self-study, study groups, reflective writing, and action research. The newest generation of teachers seeks a variety of roles and opportunities for advancement and desires to collaborate and find support within a professional community (Kraft, Marinell, & Shen-Wei Yee, 2016; Moore-Johnson, 2004). When teachers receive support, they feel empowered and have more job satisfaction (Bogler & Nir, 2012).

Key Research Findings

- Effective principals combat teacher isolation or a compartmentalized way of thinking to bring teachers together to collaborate, coplan, share resources, and have collective ownership around student learning and their own professional learning (Ostovar-Nameghi & Sheikahmadi, 2016).
- Teachers generally perceive that effective professional development programs have a significant, positive impact on their competencies, self-efficacy, and professional orientation (Gaikhorst, Beishuizen, Zijlstra, & Volman, 2015; Jacob, Hill, & Sorey, 2017; Zwart, Korthagen, & Attema-Noordewier, 2015).
- Effective professional development support is usually anchored to practice in terms of its subject-specific contents and skills and being linked to standards, curriculum, and assessments employed in schools and districts (Sun et al., 2013).
- Professional development in the form of teacher study groups and coaching is more effective than one-time presentations or one-day workshops. Collaboration among colleagues within schools; a subject-matter focus, rather than a focus on generic teaching practices; and

the fostering of teacher learning by engaging in active tasks—such as curriculum design, enactment, and reflection—are contributing factors that make professional development effective (Hill, Beisiegel, & Jacob, 2014).

- Instead of relying on traditional one-shot workshop approaches, effective principals design professional development that is grounded in teachers' real teaching contexts, coherent, based on content mastery and improvement, focused on pedagogical skills, and sustained over time (Patton, Parker, & Tannehill, 2015).
- Effective principals understand they do not have to be superheroes of teaching and learning. Successful instructional leadership requires a broader view that incorporates the expertise of teacher leaders and instructional coaches and capitalizes on the human capital within schools (Lai, Li, & Gong, 2016; Sweeney & Mausbach, 2019).

Using Data to Make Instructional Decisions

We live in a data-rich world, and we know that good data inform and guide actions, or at least they should. Without meaningful data, it is impossible to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of school initiatives. Thus, effective principals skillfully gather information that determines how well a school organization is meeting goals, and they use that information to refine strategies designed to meet or extend the goals. They find themselves in a constant state of analysis, reflection, and refinement. They challenge their staff to reexamine assumptions about their work and how it can be performed. Beyond the ability to successfully gather and analyze school data, principals need to possess basic skills for using these data for setting directions, developing people, and reinventing the organization. The use of appropriate data helps maintain a consistent focus on improving teaching and learning; consequently, effective principals accept no excuses for lack of success in improving student learning (Schildkamp, 2019).

Many proponents of school improvement stress the importance of data-driven decision making. Today, schools and school districts regularly collect demographic, achievement, instructional, and perceptual data in an effort to improve teaching and learning. For example, information is gathered to diagnose student learning and prescribe interventions that will best support students in need (Van der Kleij, Vermeulen, Schildkamp, & Eggen, 2015). Teachers collect information about their students all the time. They ask questions in the classroom, examine student work, conduct surveys, and observe students. However, with advanced technology,

many schools have the capacity to collect, manipulate, store, and retrieve data more efficiently. There is growing interest in using data in a more refined way to monitor student progress and guide decision making. (*Note: We provide a more detailed exploration of data analytics and school leadership in Chapter 5.*)

Ultimately, it isn't collecting data that matters; it's using it—and using it smartly—that counts. The demands that accompany high-stakes standardized testing compel principals to guide their schools to learn from their results and experiences. Doing so will lead to coherence within a school and offer better opportunities to sustain results. Additionally, continuous improvement requires principals to examine data and find means to address inconsistencies with expected results (Buske & Zlatkin-Troitschanskaia, 2019).

Useful and properly mined data can inform staff about the gaps between desired outcomes and the reality of the results. Again, just knowing isn't enough; doing is what matters! Data-led knowledge should result in changes in practice. Encouraging staff to collect, analyze, and determine appropriate actions based on recent and real-time results should be a collective enterprise. In fact, when staff members assume an active role in the data analysis process, it promotes solutions and actions for improving results (Marston, Lau, Muyskens, & Wilson, 2016; Schildkamp, 2019), and facilitating the active involvement of all staff in information gathering and analysis is the principal's prerogative. As a result, effective principals provide professional development for teachers and staff members to build their assessment and data literacy so they can use data to inform instruction, including the decisions they make about designing lessons, grouping students, and differentiating instruction.

Key Research Findings

- Effective school leaders skillfully gather data and translate the data into actionable information for improved instruction (Staman, Timmermans, & Visscher, 2017).
- Effective principals guide the leadership team, faculty, and staff in working together to select, gather, analyze, and act on a variety of school data, including annual state assessments, formative faculty-developed assessments, student self-assessments, and other types of learning evaluative data (Ash & Hodge, 2016).
- Teachers' capacity to use data and their beliefs about data use are shaped within their professional communities, in training sessions, and in their interactions with instructional coaches and principals. Thus,

effective principals provide professional development and create conditions to enhance teachers' skills and confidence in using assessment data to inform instruction (Datnow & Hubbard, 2015, 2016).

- Effective principals use data not only to set challenging and achievable schoolwide goals but also to maximize the feedback to individual teachers (Supovitz, 2012; van Geel, Keuning, Visscher, & Fox, 2016).
- Greater results are achieved when principals encourage school staff to actively analyze data for improving results. One study found that a schoolwide data-based decision-making intervention has an effect on student learning of approximately one extra month of schooling (van Geel et al., 2016).

A Final Word on the Power of Positive Instructional Leadership

Nothing in the principal's role is more important for ensuring successful student learning than effective instructional leadership. Effective principals are not simply transformational leaders (e.g., as shown in developing vision and fostering goals) or good at day-to-day managerial tasks (e.g., as shown in budgeting, allocating materials, scheduling, and establishing procedures); rather, they are also solid and consistent instructional leaders. Effective principals demonstrate instructional leadership through supervising and supporting teachers, coordinating coherent instructional programs, and establishing a vibrant professional learning community. Combining these efforts with using data appropriately, as well as monitoring what takes place at the classroom level, will increase the likelihood that schools will achieve their goals for student learning. Finally, the best principals know that effective leading, teaching, and learning are inseparable.

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