Acknowledgments

Part I: Why Leadership?

1. The Principal Leadership Development Framework
2. Growing as Reflective Leaders

Part II: Building Principal Leadership Capacity

3. Principal as Visionary
4. Principal as Instructional Leader
5. Principal as Engager
6. Principal as Learner and Collaborator
7. Reflective Leadership Awaits

Appendix A: Reflective Leadership Planning Template
Appendix B: Strategies for Reflective Growth
Bibliography
Index
About the Authors
PART I
Why Leadership?
CHAPTER 1
The Principal Leadership Development Framework

There are many theories and approaches concerning the particular skills and strategies of effective leadership, and attempting to cover each component would prove cumbersome, exhausting, and fruitless. Instead, built upon the foundation provided by prominent researchers, educational thinkers, and practitioners, the ASCD Principal Leadership Development Framework (PLDF) emphasizes four key roles of the building administrator that are tied directly to instructional leadership:

- Principal as Visionary
- Principal as Instructional Leader
- Principal as Engager
- Principal as Learner and Collaborator

Further, the PLDF offers 17 criteria of effective practice that focus on the leadership behaviors with the greatest direct effect on the culture and status of learning and teaching within a particular school community (Figure 1.1).

Each of these roles and criteria will be described in further detail in Chapters 3–6. In the meantime, we want to make a couple of things clear: this is not an exhaustive list of the roles and responsibilities of the school principal. Since the job is so complex, that would prove unwieldy. In addition, this is not meant for principal evaluations. It is intended to provide clear targets to support the ongoing growth and development of our leaders. Effective use and application of the Framework will ensure that current and future building leaders—and those who support them—have a thorough and accurate picture of the actions that are tied most closely to instructional leadership.

Who Will Benefit from the Framework?

In a word: leaders (both site-based and district-level). Though we use the word principal almost exclusively throughout this book, the roles, approaches, and strategies are universal for various leaders at the school level, including assistant principals, aspiring principals, department chairs, teacher leaders, members of site leadership teams, and any other de facto leadership role at the building level. In addition, the
FIGURE 1.1
ASCD’s Principal Leadership Development Framework

PRINCIPAL AS VISIONARY

1. Articulates, communicates, and leads the collaborative implementation and ongoing revision of the school’s mission and vision.
2. Aligns and bases all decisions, practices, policies, and resources (e.g., human capital, time, budget, and facilities) on the school’s mission and vision.
3. Promotes the collaborative creation, monitoring, and refinement of short- and long-term school improvement plans.
4. Compels the district and school community to embrace and work toward the attainment of the shared mission and vision.

PRINCIPAL AS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADER

1. Builds collective capacity of the entire staff through the cultivation of a robust Professional Learning Community.
2. Builds individual capacity of the entire staff through differentiated supervision, coaching, feedback, and evaluation practices.
3. Ensures the alignment of rigorous curricula, research-based best practices in instruction, and comprehensive formative and summative assessment approaches.
4. Promotes monitoring systems that use real-time data to inform instruction and intervention at the teacher, team, and school site levels.

PRINCIPAL AS ENGAGER

1. Maintains an unwavering priority of establishing and fostering an environment that tends to the whole child: healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged.
2. Creates and cultivates partnerships within the parent, district, business, political, and greater community spheres to support the achievement of the school’s mission and vision.
3. Drives and navigates positive change by assessing, analyzing, and anticipating emerging trends and implementing change-savvy techniques with staff and the school community.
4. Safeguards community values, ethics, and equitable practices, advocating for all children and displaying an appreciation for diversity.
5. Develops policies and practices that cultivate staff as reflective practitioners.

PRINCIPAL AS LEARNER AND COLLABORATOR

1. Facilitates the delivery of job-embedded, ongoing, coordinated professional learning opportunities that lead to increased student achievement.
2. Develops internal leaders and nurtures an environment of distributed leadership, collective responsibility, and collaborative decision making.
4. Participates regularly in professional learning organizations, a community of practice, and a leadership network.
The Principal Leadership Development Framework

Framework provides criteria and guidance for the district-level leadership roles—superintendents, school directors, assistant superintendents, principal supervisors, and others—who support the leadership development of current and future building-level leaders. District-level leaders, who may include curriculum coordinators and specialists, can also strengthen their instructional leadership practices by incorporating some of the strategies identified in this text into their regular professional practice.

Two Pathways to Build Leadership Capacity

There are two pathways for accessing and utilizing the PLDF, as mentioned in the Introduction:

- **Pathway One:** Individual leaders create plans and execute them to bolster the practices, structures, and processes essential for sustained professional growth.
- **Pathway Two:** The content and descriptions in the Framework can be integrated into the design of a sustainable district leadership development and coaching program for principals, assistant principals, and aspiring principals.

See Figure 1.2 for an illustration of these pathways, which are described in more detail in the sections that follow.

Pathway One: Individual Professional Growth

To create effective schools that have the strongest influence on student learning, development efforts must be embedded throughout all leadership roles, and professional learning experiences must be guided by a specific set of principles.

Growth and Development of Principals

Pursuing new learning, striving for continuous improvement, and building a never-ending repertoire of leadership skills are hallmark traits of effective school leaders (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Seated building principals—whether they are newly appointed, midcareer, or veteran educators—can all benefit from the identification and creation of key strategies, targeted goal setting, and deliberate job-embedded work plans to develop results from reflective leadership practices. Indeed, the school principal is at the heart of the Framework, hence its title: The Principal Leadership Development Framework. Principals can use this tool to take the reins of their own professional learning, boost their own reflective practice, and develop their own
expertise. Thankfully, as Doug Reeves emphatically stated, “Excellent leadership is an acquired skill” (2002, p. 4).

Growth and Development of Assistant Principals

The position of assistant principal is one of the most dynamic, essential, and fluctuating roles in education, requiring a specific set of skills and dispositions (Pounder & Crow, 2005). At the same time, assistant principals are next in line to lead schools instructionally, yet they often assume the principalship unprepared to implement the practices of effective leadership. Traditionally, assistant principals serve as the chief disciplinarians, organize athletics, support the management of the building, lead extracurricular activities, and perform “other duties as assigned.” In the Era

**FIGURE 1.2**

*Two Pathways for Accessing and Utilizing the ASCD Principal Leadership Development Framework*

[Diagram showing two pathways: Pathway One: Individual Professional Growth (school level) and Pathway Two: Sustainable District Systems (district level). Pathway One includes Growth and Development of Principals, Growth and Development of Assistant Principals, and Growth and Development of Aspiring Principals. Pathway Two includes District Supervisors, Mentors, and Coaches, District Leadership Development Programs, and District Succession Planning.]

* School Improvement
* Teacher Professional Growth
* Student Learning
of Accountability, those other duties must include instructional leadership. Assignments in leadership development programs for assistant principals and aspiring principals (and, to a lesser extent, teacher leaders) should mirror the work of a principal (Gallup, Inc., 2012). The PLDF provides direction and support for job-embedded leadership development activities to help individuals in these roles grow and transition.

Growth and Development of Aspiring Principals

Even before beginning down the path toward a principalship, aspiring administrators must have an accurate picture of what the position entails. The PLDF illustrates the necessary behaviors and approaches for effective leadership, which can help inform preservice administrators’ intentional preparation strategies and direct district personnel as they “tap” candidates for leadership roles (Pounder & Crow, 2005). Aspiring principals tend to serve as de facto leaders within the building—in fact, it’s been found that teacher leaders exert quite a bit of influence over their peers and other school leaders, illustrating the simultaneous top-down, bottom-up nature of change (Reeves, 2008). In this context, the PLDF also tends to the approaches that are intertwined with teacher leaders’ daily routines and responsibilities, thereby cultivating leadership skills while in their current roles.

Pathway Two: Sustainable District Systems

The most popular definition of sustainability can be traced to a 1987 United Nations conference. In the 96th plenary meeting of the General Assembly, sustainable developments were defined as those that “meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (United Nations, 1987). Districts today are faced with the task of creating sustainable, renewable systems of leadership development that support future generations. With that in mind, the PLDF provides insights into the what and how of designing such systems.

District Supervisors, Mentors, and Coaches

School district officials have long felt the challenges associated with leading, motivating, and guiding the ongoing professional growth of building principals. The daunting question we pose is this: How do we lead the leaders? Embracing a philosophy of continuous improvement and assuming a growth mindset (Dweck, 2006), those in district leadership positions can indeed affect the thinking, decision making, planning, and actions of their seated principals. When professional development includes resources such as job-embedded coaching and feedback, educators are able
to apply their new learning and skills at an increased rate of around 95 percent (Joyce & Showers, 1982). Within the PLDF are the tools for districts to tackle the ambitious and vital task of growing their leadership corps.

District Leadership Development Programs

From the district perspective, leadership development within the ranks is a top priority. Every member of the central or district office must understand effective leadership practices and act accordingly. The PLDF assists in the creation of dynamic and rigorous leadership development programs, inclusive of central office staff, that prepare the district to systematically tackle leadership capacity building that has a positive influence on student achievement. Indeed, “leadership is vital to the effectiveness of a school” (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 4). By extension, ensuring a robust pipeline of future positional leaders is vital to the effectiveness and survival of a district.

District Succession Planning

Twenty percent of first-year principals leave their schools within the first or second year, creating a domino effect that affects both teaching and student achievement (Burkhauser et al., 2012). Every school site within a district has particular needs, shaped in part by its unique demographics, climate, culture, and current contextual reality. Conducting a real-time needs assessment and matching principals’ skills to particular assignments ensures that you can have the “right people in the right seats” at the right time (Collins, 2001, p. 41). Succession planning helps districts focus on leadership skill development and professional development opportunities (Hall, Salamone, & Standley, 2009). When a principal vacates a position, the district has an opportunity to maintain course or shift focus. It is the district’s responsibility to ensure smooth, aligned, and thoughtfully planned transitions and a continued focus on successful progress during a change in leadership. Applying strategies from the PLDF can support such succession plans.


Kafele, B. (2013). *Closing the attitude gap: How to fire up your students to strive for success*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.


Veteran school administrator and leadership expert **Pete Hall** has dedicated his career to supporting the improvement of our education systems. In addition to his teaching experiences in Massachusetts, California, and Nevada, he served as a school principal for 12 years in Nevada and Washington. This is his sixth book to accompany over a dozen articles on school leadership. When he’s not competing in triathlons, Pete currently works as an educational consultant as a member of the ASCD Faculty and trains educators worldwide. You can contact him via e-mail at Pete.Hall.Faculty@ascd.org or connect on Twitter at @EducationHall.

**Deborah Childs-Bowen** is an internationally recognized transformational educator having served in diverse roles as teacher, principal, district administrator, educational researcher, and university professor. She was past president of Learning Forward (NSDC) and a Marzano consultant. Her knowledge, expert facilitation, executive coaching, and school improvement practices enhance transferring research into application. Deborah is a contributing author to books, toolkits, and professional journals through SERVE, ASCD, NSDC, Corwin, and NASSP. She is chief learning officer with Creative Mind Enterprise, building capacity and equitable learning opportunities that improve practice for educators and learning for all students. She can be reached at deborah@creativemindenterprise.com.
Ann Cunningham-Morris has served educators for over 35 years. She is the former director of professional development for ASCD. She has also been a district-level instructional administrator, school-based administrator, teacher leader, and classroom teacher in seven different states. Additionally, Ms. Cunningham-Morris is an ASCD Faculty member and has served as an educational consultant to many school systems throughout the world in the areas of leadership development, curriculum development, effective professional learning, and instructional best practices. She has written articles, blogs, and provided interviews on these topics for professional publications. She can be reached at acunning.faculty@ascd.org or on Twitter at @ancmo

Phyllis Pajardo is presently the assistant superintendent in Fairfax City, VA, schools. Prior to that, Phyllis served Fairfax County (Virginia) Public Schools for 34 years; she was the assistant superintendent of Human Resources as well as Cluster II, where she was “lead learner” for 28 schools/principals. Phyllis has been an elementary teacher, consulting teacher, assistant principal, principal, specialist, project manager, and director. She is an adjunct faculty for George Mason University and the University of Virginia and serves on the ASCD Faculty, facilitating professional learning on leadership and consulting on leadership development approaches. A native Virginian, Phyllis’s dissertation was published in 2009. She loves mentoring and developing aspiring leaders, watching professional basketball and football, listening to contemporary jazz and gospel music, and traveling with her family.

Veteran educator Alisa Simeral has guided school-based reform efforts as a teacher, dean, instructional coach, and professional developer. Her emphasis is, and always has been, improving the adult-input factors that contribute to increased student-output results. She has spent the past 10 years studying and writing on this topic, and she is the coauthor of several ASCD books. Alisa currently works as both a district-level instructional coach in Reno, Nevada, and educational consultant on the ASCD Faculty. Her mantra is “When our teachers succeed, our students succeed.” You can contact her via email at Alisa.Simeral.Faculty@ascd.org or catch her Twitter feed at @AlisaSimeral.