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THE ONTARIO LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK 2012

with a Discussion of the
Research Foundations

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1. Introduction

For purposes of the *Ontario Leadership Framework* (OLF), leadership is defined as the exercise of influence on organizational members and diverse stakeholders toward the identification and achievement of the organization’s vision and goals. This influence may have many sources (e.g. administrators¹, parents, teachers and trustees), is typically reciprocal rather than unidirectional, and is exercised through relationships between and among individuals, groups, and the settings in which they find themselves. Leadership, defined in this way, is “successful” to the extent that it makes significant, positive, and ethically defensible² contributions to progress in achieving the organization’s vision and goals.

For aspiring leaders, this framework provides important insights about what they will need to learn to be successful. Those already exercising leadership will find the framework a useful tool for self-reflection and self-assessment. The framework is a key source of objectives for leadership developers in the province and one transparent, defensible basis on which to assess and provide feedback about the quality of leadership enacted in schools and school systems. Those responsible for recruiting and selecting new leaders also find support for their work in this revision of the OLF.

1.1 Overview

This OLF 2012 reflects two distinct approaches to the description of successful leadership practice³, one focused on the work of individuals and small groups (*Successful Leadership Practices*), the other concerned with the effectiveness of the organization as a whole (*Successful Organizational Practices*), consistent with the claim that leadership is an “organizational property”⁴.

The *Successful Leadership Practices* described in the original OLF were derived from a relatively large body of evidence dominated by research about school-level leadership, but supported by evidence about leadership at other levels in the organization and in other types of organizations, suggesting that the practices were widely relevant for leaders in many roles and contexts⁵. Nevertheless, the source of the evidence on which the original *Successful Leadership Practices* were derived means that the organizational level to which they were most closely connected empirically was the school. This also means that Ontario’s *School Effectiveness Framework*, based on a closely parallel (indeed, in some cases overlapping) data base, describes

¹ Administrators includes both principals and vice-principals. Throughout this text, where the term “principal” is used, this may also include vice-principals where appropriate.

² There are many perspectives on how to judge the ethical defensibility of a leader’s influence. One helpful, reasonably practical, perspective has been provided by Warwick and Kelman (1976). According to their conception, influence strategies which are most transparent and leave the most freedom of choice for those being influenced are the most ethical; these are typically “facilitative”, followed by “persuasive” strategies. At the least ethical end are “manipulative”, followed by “coercive” strategies.

³ For more on this distinction, see Bolden & Gosling (2006)

⁴ One good description of this view of leadership can be found in Ogawa and Bossert (1995).

⁵ This evidence is reviewed in Leithwood et al (2007)

organizational practices these individual and group leadership practices helped to develop in order to improve valued student outcomes.

The *Successful Organizational Practices* (labeled “System Practices and Procedures” in the original OLF), are replaced in this revision by a set of school system practices initially identified in several comprehensive reviews of research about characteristics of “high performing” school systems⁶ and modified to reflect the Ontario context. These characteristics were subsequently tested for their contributions to student learning through an original, mixed-methods, study sponsored by the Institute for Educational Leadership and carried out in 49 Ontario school systems⁷. The original OLF did not include a parallel set of effective leadership practices associated with school system leadership assuming, instead, that the original OLF *Successful Leadership Practices* applied equally well to both school- level and school system-level leaders⁸. Although not rejecting such an assumption, the revised OLF, nevertheless, adds a set of effective individual and small group leadership practices to acknowledge the unique contexts, challenges and opportunities of system-level leaders.

In sum, the revised OLF, now describes successful individual and small group practices for both school and system level leaders, as well as effective organizational practices at both school and system levels. Both sets of individual and small group practices are intended to be useful, in particular, for purposes of leadership development.

Each of the sets of practices detailed in the sections below assist educators in building coherence and aligning practices across schools and districts. Discussion of these practices provides opportunities to determine areas of strength and areas that would benefit from refinements. They are not checklists but rather tools for discussion and growth.

In addition, the OLF now includes a section entitled *Personal Leadership Resources*. This section distils evidence about leadership traits and dispositions most likely to influence the effectiveness with which leadership practices are enacted. These resources are intended to be especially relevant for purposes of leadership recruitment and selection.

1.2 The Concept of Leadership “Practice”⁹

The revised OLF is about successful leadership and organizational “practices” as distinct from “competencies” (a concept widely used in the management development field and represented in the original OLF by skills, knowledge and attitudes). A competency is typically defined as “an underlying characteristic of an individual that is causally related to effective or superior

⁶ See Leithwood (2009) and Rorrer, Skyla & Scheurich (2009)

⁷ See Leithwood (2010).

⁸ “system leaders” in this paper is meant to denote directors, superintendents and central office managers with system responsibilities

⁹ This account of practices was significantly influenced by a series of papers by Carroll, Levy & Richmond (2008), Bolden & Gosling (2006) and Bolden (2004).

performance in a job”¹⁰. Commonly cited weaknesses of efforts to define management and (especially) leadership competencies include:

- The fragmentation of roles that are better understood as integrated wholes;
- The assumption that a generic set of capacities is suitable in all contexts;
- The focus on current and past performances rather than what is needed to meet future challenges;
- The emphasis on measurable behaviors to the exclusion of more subtle dispositions and “softer interpersonal qualities sought from people at many levels across the organization”¹¹;
- Lack of empirical evidence linking competencies to improved organizational outcomes;
- The encouragement of conformity rather than diversity on the part of individuals;
- The assumption that those who excel in the same role display the same behaviors.

Invoking the concept of “practices”, in contrast to “competencies”, aims to acknowledge:

- The situated and social context in which leadership is exercised;
- The central nature of relationships in leadership work;
- The importance of leaders responding flexibly to the situations, events and challenges which present themselves in order to accomplish important goals;
- The shared nature of leadership work in virtually all organizations.

A “practice”, in other words, is a bundle of activities exercised by a person or group of persons which reflect the particular circumstances in which they find themselves and with some shared outcome(s) in mind. Conceptualizing leadership as a set of practices reflects both the adaptive qualities¹² and expert problem-solving processes¹³ emphasized in some previous accounts of effective leadership. So a focus on practices overcomes many of the limitations associated with a focus on competencies. But not all and for good reasons.

First, a commitment to being evidence based means that OLF’s practices necessarily are derived from research about what effective leaders have done in the past, not what they might do in the future. But since our ability to predict those leadership practices likely to be effective in the future is extremely tenuous, to say the least, encouraging leaders to enact what is known now about effective practices seems the most prudent and likely the most productive direction to take in the near term. Second, in spite of appreciating the integrated nature of effective leadership practices, any attempt at a fuller account of them, as in the OLF, does provide some encouragement for a fragmented understanding of how leadership is exercised. The alternative, however, is to offer forms of guidance to existing leaders (for example, be an “instructional” or a “transformational” leader) which are so abstract as to have almost no practical value. Learning how to play a sport is a useful analogy here. While playing a sport well requires the seamless integration of many discrete movements, one gets better at the sport by sometimes working at perfecting the discrete movements by themselves – difficult to do in the absence of knowing about those discrete movements.

¹⁰ Carroll, Levy & Richmond (p 364).

¹¹ Bolden & Gosling, (p 364).

¹² For example, Heifetz (1999)

¹³ For example, Leithwood & Steinbach (1995)

In addition, some have argued¹⁴ that any effort to codify either leadership practices or competencies in a set of “standards” or a “framework”, as in Ontario’s case, promotes a static conception of effective leadership whereas knowledge in the field is decidedly dynamic and evolving. There is no denying the dynamic and evolving nature of research-based knowledge about leadership. Indeed, the field is more active now than it has ever been. But the solution is not to simply throw up one’s hands in despair of capturing existing knowledge. A much more productive solution is to commit to periodic reviews of the field and revisions of previous understandings, as is being done in this OLF revision. While the leadership research field is very active now, it is not so active as to make a “static” description of the field inaccurate for at least a period of six to eight years.

Both the original and newly revised OLF consist of five domains of practices – *Setting Directions, Building Relationships and Developing People, Developing the Organization to Support Desired Practices, Improving the Instructional Program, and Securing Accountability* – and each of these domains includes a handful of more specific practices. As the domain labels indicate, the OLF describes a set of shorter-term goals that need to be accomplished if the fundamental purposes of the school and school system¹⁵ are to be realized. These shorter-term goals are likely to be accomplished in a variety of ways depending, for example, on local community expectations, organizational culture, strengths and weaknesses of professional staffs and the like. So the practices outlined in the OLF leave considerable room for adaptation to local circumstances and assume considerable problem solving expertise on the part of those exercising leadership. Evidence suggests that these same practices are effective for those in many roles and in quite different organizational contexts if they are enacted in ways that take suitable account of those roles and contexts.

1.3 Leadership and Management: Exploring the Distinction

Much has been written about the distinction between the concepts of leadership and management. Those advocating such a distinction claim, for example, that:

- management is about the status quo while leadership is about change;
- management focuses on the short term while leadership focuses on the longer term;
- management is about keeping “the ship” running smoothly while leadership is about disrupting the status quo;
- management is about doing things right while leadership is about doing the right things.

The OLF adopts an integrative perspective on these concepts because the tasks typically associated with both concepts make potentially important contributions to the achievement of organizational goals. So one defining attribute of effective leaders is their ability to carry out even the most routine and seemingly trivial tasks in such a way as to nudge their organizations toward their purposes. This is one of the ways in which the separate parts of their especially effective organizations come to be productively aligned. Consider the task of timetabling, for example, a task all principals have to carry out in their schools. Marginally effective principals often view timetabling as a routine or “technical” administrative task and create timetables for their schools largely aimed at satisfying the preferences of their teachers. Highly effective

¹⁴ For example, see English (2006)

¹⁵ In Ontario, these are goals about student achievement, student well-being and support for public education.

principals, in contrast, typically view timetabling as an “adaptive” task, an opportunity to maximize instructional time for their students and to provide opportunities for collaborative work by their teachers¹⁶. As this example illustrates, it is not the generic task (timetabling) that distinguishes these two groups of principals. Both principals do it. It is dramatically different goals that the two groups of principals bring to the timetabling task (along with their skill in carrying out the task) that accounts for differences in their effectiveness.

An integrated approach to leadership and management also has significant consequences for the work of non-academic leaders – and their perspective on the purposes for that work. These leaders influence functions that are quite crucial to the accomplishment of the school’s and district’s goals. For example, those directly responsible for finance have central responsibilities for ensuring that financial resources are suitably allocated to support organizational priorities. Those responsible for physical facilities have much to contribute to a safe and healthy environment and a positive school climate, as do those responsible for transportation. And human resource administrators, through their influence on staffing decisions, quite directly contribute to the quality of instruction in classrooms.

Integrating what are sometimes considered to be leadership and management practices, therefore, avoids a fundamental misunderstanding of the work leaders need to do in order to focus the commitments, energies and talents of the people in their organizations in service of their shared goals. Furthermore, several recent studies¹⁷ have found that among the large range of tasks associated with school leadership - some clearly intended to directly improve instruction and some primarily concerned with organizational management – those most directly concerned with organizational management make significant contributions to student achievement. These results support much earlier evidence, reported by Hallinger (2003), that leadership practices in his model of “instructional leadership” most directly focused on improving classroom instruction had weaker effects on achievement than practices directly aimed at building the organization (school culture, for example).

Taken as a whole, this evidence indicates that school leaders not only need to provide fairly direct assistance to the instructional improvement efforts of their staffs, they also need to build organizational contexts which support and enable such those efforts.

1.4 Elementary and Secondary School Leaders: Direct and Indirect Approaches to OLF Enactment

Most empirical studies of school leadership effects on schools and students report significant differences between elementary and secondary school leaders¹⁸. Usually concerned with principals, in particular, these same studies rarely offer much insight about the reasons for these differences, however. But some of those reasons seem self-evident and clues to some of the others are to be found in the anecdotal evidence which routinely surfaces during informal conversations with principals.

¹⁶ Heifetz (1999) provides an extended account of the difference between adaptive and technical approaches.

¹⁷ Grissom & Loeb (2011); Francera & Bliss (2011)

¹⁸ Louis, Dretzke & Wahlstrom (2010) is one example of such a study.

Organizational size. While there are small secondary schools and very large elementary schools, the typical secondary school is quite a bit larger than the typical elementary school. Larger organizations demand of their leaders more coordination effort and more time devoted to human resource challenges. Budgets are larger, timetabling is more complicated and facilities problems are more frequent, as well, all because of organizational size.

Organizational culture. Elementary school cultures often are reported to be more collaborative than the cultures of secondary schools, as well as more student oriented. Secondary schools necessarily value subject matter disciplines and this is sometimes viewed as competing with their student orientation.

Managerial roles. Elementary schools often have few formal administrative positions other than the principal and vice-principalship while most secondary schools have a well-established layer of middle managers in positions such as department heads. These middle management roles offer secondary principals opportunities for leadership distribution unavailable to most elementary principals. These opportunities shift the principal's leadership task from direct efforts at providing instructional leadership for teachers to ensuring that those in middle management roles have the dispositions, knowledge, skills and motivations to provide such leadership to their teaching colleagues.

Curriculum complexity. The typical secondary school curriculum, taken as a whole, demands a much greater range of pedagogical content knowledge than does the elementary school curriculum. This challenge is usually met by appointing staff with subject specializations. Whereas elementary school leaders are sometimes admonished to deepen their own pedagogical knowledge across much of the elementary school curriculum¹⁹, secondary school leaders are rarely expected to do the same largely because it is patently so unrealistic.

While these are not the only plausible reasons for elementary – secondary leadership differences, they do provide a strong foundation for assuming that secondary principals will need to approach the leadership practices included in the OLF quite differently than will elementary school principals - more indirectly, for the most part. Many elementary principals, especially those in relatively small schools, will need to take personal responsibility for enacting many of the OLF practices - or working closely with a small leadership team to enact those practices. Many secondary principals, on the other hand, especially those in relatively large schools, will need to take personal responsibility for enacting some of the OLF practices, as well as ensuring that other formal leaders have the necessary capacities to enact the rest - often through multiple leadership teams distributed throughout the school. These principals will also need to monitor the enactment of those practices considered the responsibility of others; ensuring the capacity to enact them is not enough.

This assumption is about the directness with which OLF practices are enacted and no sharp distinction between elementary and secondary school leaders will be productive. But there is a strong tendency for a greater proportion of OLF practices to be enacted directly by elementary school principals and indirectly by effective secondary school principals. The authors of one

¹⁹ For example, see the assumptions about elementary principals' pedagogical content knowledge in mathematics underlying the research by Nelson and Sassi (2005).

large US study of secondary school leaders reported that these leaders were: “leveraging their influence on teaching and learning through their hiring, culture building, data use, and work with an instructional leadership team... Principals instructional leadership was largely a leveraged activity with and through the expertise of the other instructional leaders...” These researchers also pointed out that the principals in their study found it “increasingly difficult to keep up with different curriculum reforms, not to mention the wide range of subject-matter expertise implied by the secondary school curriculum”²⁰.

The OLF practices themselves are equally suitable and important for effective leadership in both elementary and secondary schools.

1.5 Shared Leadership and Formal Authority: Getting the Right Balance Right²¹

A rapidly growing body of evidence has confirmed the widespread understanding of those who work in schools that many people in schools and school systems provide leadership as defined by the OLF; it is not the exclusive purview of those in formal positions of authority as, for example, principals, vice principals or teacher leaders. Nor is such leadership confined to professional educators in the school. For example, parents are able to exert considerable influence on the purposes to which schools aspire and the processes for realizing those purposes, particularly when they act collectively.

Many claims about the virtues of intentionally sharing leadership – rather than just “letting it happen” - can be found in the literature²². It is argued, for example, that shared leadership:

- creates a more democratic organization;
- provides greater opportunities for collective learning;
- provides opportunities for teacher development;
- increases the school’s capacity to respond intelligently to the many and complex challenges it faces.

While there is little empirical evidence for most of these claims, evidence has begun to support claims that (especially planned and coordinated forms of) leadership distribution:

- contribute to improved student achievement²³;
- assist schools to cope productively with rapid leader succession²⁴;
- facilitate school improvement processes²⁵.

An additional and especially compelling reason for sharing leadership in schools is rooted in Ontario’s commitment to educational equity and inclusion and safe schools with a positive school climate. Prominent theorists and researchers concerned with these elements of social

²⁰ Portin & Knapp (2011)

²¹ The terms “distributed” and “shared” leadership are used as synonyms throughout this document.

²² For a review of this literature, see Leithwood, Mascall & Strauss (2009)

²³ See, for example, Louis & Wahlstrom (2010); Heck & Hallinger (2009).

²⁴ See Mascall and Leithwood (2010)

²⁵ Harris et al (2003); Higgins & Bonne (2011)

justice²⁶ argue that providing equitable opportunities to influence the school and school system’s decision making by those whose voices typically have not been heard will lead to significantly improved educational experiences for diverse and disadvantaged students. Such “culturally responsive pedagogy”, these theorists and advocates argue, requires knowledge about students and their circumstances best acquired directly from those whose interests have been neglected in the past. Sharing leadership with those who possess this knowledge, especially the parents and guardians of diverse and disadvantaged students, is the best way of acquiring it.

So there are many good reasons for encouraging shared leadership in schools and school systems. But it is important to acknowledge that not all forms of shared leadership are “successful”. For example, recent evidence collected in Ontario schools found that among the different patterns of shared leadership or leadership distribution observed, only those which included efforts to coordinate the actions of those providing leadership made a positive contribution to school improvement²⁷. More spontaneous patterns, those lacking coordination functions, were actually negatively related to school improvement progress. Importantly, coordinated patterns of leadership distribution depended on the active encouragement and attention of the school’s principal.

Shared leadership, in sum, makes important contributions to organizational improvement but successful forms of such leadership depend on the active engagement of those in positions of formal authority.

1.6. Continuing Support for the Core Leadership Capacities

The identification of five Core Leadership Capacities (CLCs) (*Setting Goals, Aligning Resources with Priorities, Promoting Collaborative Learning Cultures, Using Data, and Engaging in Courageous Conversations*) following publication of the first version of the OLF was helpful in focusing and aligning leadership work and the capacities found resonance with leaders across the province. Support for the CLCs continues in this revision.

Evidence of the CLCs is found in various domains of the OLF and just as with the original OLF, the CLCs support the work of leaders as they enact practices and use the Personal Leadership Resources across domains. As an example of the cross domain use of the CLCs, *Engaging in Courageous Conversations* supports these three practices:

- “Stimulating growth in the professional capacities of staff” from the *Building Relationships and Developing People* domain, for example, “challenge staff to re-examine the extent to which their practices contribute to the learning of all of their students”;
- “Building trusting relationships with and among staff, student and parents” from the *Building Relationships and Developing People* domain, for example “demonstrate respect for staff, students and parents by listening to their ideas, being open to those ideas and genuinely considering their value” and “create norms in the school which value constructive debate about best practices”; and

²⁶ See Ryan (2011) and Ladson-Billings (1995), for example

²⁷ Leithwood, Mascall & Strauss (2009)

- “Building collaborative cultures and distributing leadership” from the *Developing the Organization to Support Desired Practices* domain, for example, “foster open and fluent communication among collaborators”.

The School

2. School-level Leadership Practices

2.1 Introduction

Revisions of this section of the OLF aimed to:

- reduce the scope of the leadership practices included in the original OLF exclusively to those for which there is systematic empirical evidence of positive effects on valued student outcomes;
- ensure that the leadership practices included in the OLF reflect research published since the original version of the OLF was developed;
- provide an integrated perspective on successful leadership, one that combines what are sometimes considered to be leadership and management tasks, as well as distinct styles, models or approaches to leadership. Such integration is justified on the grounds that the dynamic nature of the improvement challenges facing school and district leaders require what has been termed, aptly, “leadership ambidexterity”²⁸ ;

These objectives were accomplished in two steps. The first step was to retrieve the original research-based practices serving as the starting point²⁹ for professional input during development of the original OLF; eleven parallel reviews of evidence, reported both before and after the original OLF was published (see Section A.1 of the reference list), were used to supplement the original starting point. The second step was to identify and analyze original empirical studies published during the past five years in nine journals³⁰ which are the most frequent sources of high-quality research on educational leadership; 38 studies were identified (see Section A.2 of the reference list). This body of evidence, as a whole, identifies leadership practices associated with student-related outcomes, primarily achievement.

Reviews of this evidence confirmed the utility of the five domains or categories of successful leadership practices included in the original OLF but added six specific practices to several of the domains including:

- Building trusting relationships within and among staff, students and parents;
- Establishing productive working relationships with teacher federation representatives;

²⁸ Rosing, Frese & Bausch (2011)

²⁹ Leithwood et al (2006)

³⁰ These journals included *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *Journal of School Leadership*, *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, *Journal of Educational Administration*, *School Leadership and Management*, *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, *Elementary School Journal*, *Educational Management, Administration & Leadership*, and the *American Educational Research Journal*.

- Maintaining a safe and healthy environment;
- Allocating resources in support of the school’s vision and goals;
- Assisting with the implementation of a rigorous curriculum (as provided by the Ministry of Education in Ontario);
- Building staff members sense of internal accountability.

Each domain now encompasses from two to six specific practices (21 altogether), whatever number was warranted by the evidence. The five domains of practices include *Setting Directions* (4 specific practices), *Building Relationships and Developing People* (5 specific practices), *Developing the Organization to Sustain Desired Practices* (6 specific practices), *Improving the Instructional Program* (4 specific practices), and *Securing Accountability* (2 specific practices). For the most part, the order in which the specific practices within each domain are described is irrelevant.

The first three of these domains reflect social theory suggesting that the performance of organizational members is a function of their motivation, ability and the settings in which they work. So key functions of leaders include assisting their teachers and other organizational colleagues to further develop their motivations (one of the primary purposes for *Setting Directions*) and abilities (the purpose for *Building Relationships and Developing People*) to accomplish organizational goals, as well as to create and sustain supportive work settings (the goal of *Developing the Organization to Sustain Desired Practices*).

Every organization has a unique “technology” for accomplishing its primary purposes and the fourth domain of practices included in the OLF, *Improving the Instructional Program*, reflects that “technology” for schools (teaching and learning). The fifth and final domain of OLF practices (*Securing Accountability*) is justified by the policy context in which contemporary public schooling finds itself, one which places unprecedented demands on leaders to publicly demonstrate the progress being made toward accomplishing the purposes established for their organizations.

These practices, as a whole, do not align themselves with any specific leadership model or theory. While leadership models and theories provide a conceptual coherence which can assist in building understanding, no existing individual theory or model captures a sufficient proportion of what leaders actually do to serve the purposes intended for the OLF. That said, the OLF does reflect most of the practices found in current models of both “instructional” and “transformational” leadership. Using a term that is becoming common in the educational leadership literature, it is an “integrated” model³¹, although a more fully developed one than appears in the literature to date. This integrated model aims to capture the relatively direct efforts of successful leaders to improve the quality of teaching and learning in their schools (the primary focus of instructional leadership models), as well as their efforts to create organizational conditions which enable and support those improvement efforts (the primary focus of transformational leadership models).

³¹ See, for example, Robinson et al (2009) and Printy, Marks & Bowers (2010)

The OLF is also explicitly “contingent”. While practices included in the OLF are what most successful leaders do in many different contexts, their practical value depends on leaders enacting them in ways that are sensitive to the specific features of the circumstances and settings in which they work and the people with whom they are working. For example, how a leader goes about “developing people” is likely to be very different in a school filled with largely new and inexperienced (albeit eager) teachers than it is in a school mostly staffed by a group of experienced and highly skilled teachers.

The contingent nature of the OLF also acknowledges the importance of time in better understanding both the nature and impact of what successful leaders do. Although most formal approaches to leadership neglect considerations of time³², leadership practitioners are well aware, for example, that:

- their own skills and performance change over time;
- the internal dynamics of their staff change over time, requiring them to adapt in response;
- their interpersonal relationships with staff change over time;
- building trust with staff requires significant amounts of time;
- much of their influence depends not just on what they do but when they do it.

The contingent nature of successful leadership has important consequences for how the OLF is used. For example, judging a leader’s development entails not only assessing the extent to which a person is generally skilled in the use of OLF practices, it also entails judging the extent to which they are able to enact those practices in a contextually appropriate way. For example, the priority placed by the Ontario government on social justice in the province’s public schools, a priority evident in attempts to close the achievement gap and to develop inclusive school organizations, means that key features of their contexts to be accounted for by leaders will be the economic, cultural and religious diversity evident in their schools’ communities

While the OLF offers some guidelines for making judgments about how the contextual sensitivity of leaders’ practices, those using the OLF are expected to bring considerable local knowledge to the task.

2.2 Setting Directions

The primary purpose to be served by this set of leadership practices is to ensure that organizational members and other stakeholders are working toward the same set of purposes and that these purposes are a legitimate expression of both provincial policy and local community aspirations. Provincial policy directions will typically be very explicit, so not difficult to discern. Forging directions for the school which also reflect local community aspirations is typically more challenging, particularly for schools serving highly diverse communities, given the province’s commitment to inclusive education.

Shared purposes contribute to alignment of effort which increases not only the effectiveness but the efficiency of the school organization. But the less obvious purpose for direction setting is

³² For a very useful analysis of on the importance of time in understanding leadership and its neglect in leadership research, see Shamir (2011)

about motivation. Almost all contemporary theories of human motivation³³ place individual person's goals at the heart of their theories; people are motivated by goals or purposes in which they strongly believe, for whatever reason. These purposes might arise from deeply held values and beliefs, sometimes called "moral"³⁴, as for example, improving the life chances of disadvantaged children. But they might, as well, be much more "mundane" although still quite important (e.g., making more money).

Whether conscious of it or not, everyone is motivated by multiple purposes that range from simple to complex, other-centered to individually-centered, abstract to concrete and the like. The leadership challenge is to bring together – or align – at least some of the individual purposes motivating students, staff and other school stakeholders with the purposes of the school, as a whole, as well as with the prevailing policy goals of the school system and province.

Improving the literacy and numeracy skills of students is an example of a goal common to most school systems and schools in Ontario and expressly part of provincial policy. It is a goal to be accomplished as one means of moving toward Ontario's vision of the educated graduate, a person sufficiently literate and numerate to thrive both socially and economically in an unknowable future and to make a productive contribution to the quality of that future for others.

As this example begins to make clear, the directions set for a school should range from quite abstract to quite specific. OLF refers to the broadest, longest term or most abstract purposes as "vision" and the more specific and shorter term purposes as "goals". Both are quite important for school stakeholders to understand and agree on. Broad visions build commitment (they are "targets that beckon"³⁵) appealing, as they typically do, to relatively fundamental values and beliefs. Specific goals, on the other hand, signal priorities for school improvement efforts right now if progress is to be made toward the vision. Goals often point to new capacities that staff might need to develop, as well, especially if it is clear to everyone involved that leaders hold high expectations for the achievement of the vision and goals.

Of course, neither vision nor goals carry much motivational "weight" unless they are well-known to all or most of the school's stakeholders. Vision and goals need to be widely communicated, preferably through participation in their identification to begin with, through persuasion or through other effective communication strategies. Which of these and other possible methods might work best depends very much on the context in which leaders find themselves

2.2.1 Building a Shared Vision

Building a compelling vision of the organization's future is a fundamental task included in many leadership models³⁶. This practice makes both positive and significant contributions to organizational goals³⁷. Formulating a vision, a key mechanism for achieving integration or

³³ For example, see Bandura (1996)

³⁴ See Fullan (2003) & Hargreaves & Fink (2006), for example.

³⁵ A close approximation to this phrase appears in Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran (2011), attributed to Bennis & Nanus (1985)

³⁶ Both transformational and charismatic leadership models are examples.

³⁷ See Silins & Mulford (2002) and Harris et al (2003)

alignment of activities within the organization³⁸, includes the establishment of organizational values and those values shape the means by which the vision is to be accomplished.

Leaders who are successful at building a shared vision:

- Establish, with staff, students and other stakeholders, an overall sense of purpose or vision for work in their schools to which they are all strongly committed;
- Build understanding of the specific implications of the schools' vision for its' programs and the nature of classroom instruction;
- Encourage the development of organizational norms that support openness to change in the direction of that purpose or vision;
- Help staff and other stakeholders to understand the relationship between their schools' vision and board and provincial policy initiatives and priorities.

2.2.2 Identifying Specific, Shared, Short-term Goals

While visions can be inspiring, productive action typically requires some agreement on the more immediate goals to be accomplished in order to move toward the vision. Identifying those relatively immediate goals, however, needs to be done in such a way so that individual members come to include the organization's goals among their own. Unless this happens, the organization's goals have no motivational value; they must be viewed as personally important. So leaders can productively spend a lot of time on this set of practices. Giving short shrift misses the point entirely³⁹. In district and school settings, strategic and improvement planning processes are among the more explicit contexts in which these behaviors are manifest.

Leaders who are effective in identifying specific, shared, short-term goals for their schools' improvement efforts:

- Facilitate stakeholder engagement in processes for identifying specific school goals;
- Do whatever is necessary to make the goals clear to all stakeholders;
- Regularly encourage staff to evaluate their progress toward achieving school goals;
- Encourage staff to develop and periodically review individual professional growth goals, as well as the relationship between their individual professional goals and the school's goals
- Make frequent explicit reference to (and use of) the school's goals when engaged in decisions about school programs and directions;
- Build consensus among students, staff and other stakeholders for the school's goals and priorities.

Whom leaders include as "stakeholders" in the process of identifying school goals is an important part of leaders' efforts to better serve the needs of diverse students and to develop more inclusive schools. Inclusion can only be achieved when those typically excluded from such key decision-making processes as school goal setting have access to those processes and when

³⁸ Lock (2002, p. 14)

³⁹ Podsakoff et al. (1990)

the school empowers them with the confidence and skills they need to contribute meaningfully to those processes⁴⁰.

2.2.3 Creating High performance Expectations

This leadership practice is included as part of direction setting because it is closely aligned with goals. While high performance expectations do not define the substance of organizational goals, they demonstrate the degree of effort expected to accomplish those goals, as well as the level of performance associated with the goals (e.g., achievement of the goals by all students not just some). Creating high performance expectations among students, staff and parents for those students who have traditionally struggled at school is central to the development of more inclusive schools and to closing the achievement gap.

Leaders who successfully enact this practice:

- Have high expectations for teachers, for students, and for themselves;
- Devote additional effort to creating high expectations among staff for the achievement of students who have traditionally struggled to be successful at school;
- Encourage staff to be innovative, if needed, in achieving those expectations;
- Encourage staff to assume responsibility for achieving the schools vision and goals with all students;
- Make their expectations known through both their words and (especially) their actions.

2.2.4 Communicating the Vision and Goals

Even the most participative processes for building a school's shared vision and goals will not include everyone who should know about the school's directions. It is also important to remind even those who did participate extensively in those directions - setting processes about the outcome of their deliberations and to demonstrate what pursuing those directions means for their day-to-day work.

Leaders successfully communicate their schools' directions when they:

- Use many different formal and informal opportunities to explain the overall vision and goals established for the school to stakeholders;
- Demonstrate to all stakeholders what the school's visions and goals mean in practice;
- Regularly invite different stakeholder groups to describe how their work furthers the schools' vision and goals.

2.3 Building Relationships and Developing People

The five sets of practices in this category make a significant contribution to motivation. Their primary aim is capacity building; however, building not only the knowledge and skill staff need to accomplish organizational goals but also the dispositions to persist in applying their

⁴⁰ For more on this, see Ryan (2006)

knowledge and skills⁴¹. Both collective and individual teacher efficacy are arguably the most critical of these dispositions and a third source of motivation in one widely regarded model of motivation⁴². People are motivated by what they are good at. And opportunities to become more skillful at a valued task are the most powerful sources of efficacy. So building capacity leading to a sense of mastery is highly motivational, as well. Trusting relationships provide the foundation required by most people for engaging in the risks required to both learn and try out new practices⁴³.

2.3.1 Providing Support and Demonstrating Consideration for Individual Staff Members

This leadership practice aims to harness as much of the professional capacities and motivations of its members as possible. Individual teachers, for example, will frequently have ideas and be engaged in practices that are of great value in realizing the school's directions even though those ideas and practices may not be reflected in the school's improvement plans. Unless those in leadership roles develop close working relations with individual teachers, individual teachers' promising ideas and practices will not be given the attention they deserve. They will certainly not become part of the school's shared expertise. So attention to the work of individual staff members is important for extending the collective expertise of the school. Such attention also demonstrates respect for staff and concerns about their personal feelings and needs, which is likely to further their motivation for helping their students learn, as well as their job satisfaction⁴⁴.

This practice does more, however, than expand the school's instructional expertise. It also has the potential to expand the school's leadership expertise. While the leadership of those in administrative roles has positional authority, the success of such leadership is highly dependent on the capacities that administrative leaders bring to their work. The capacity of those acting as informal leaders is even more important. It is often the only factor legitimating what they do in the eyes of their colleagues. Establishing close working relations with staff is an important means through which formal leaders are able to identify the leadership potential of others in their schools.

Leaders who enact this practice successfully:

- Recognize individual staff member accomplishments;
- Take staff members' opinion into consideration when initiating actions that affect their work;
- Build upon and respond to individual staff members' unique needs and expertise;
- Treat individuals and groups equitably

⁴¹ Harris et al (2003)

⁴² Bandura (1986)

⁴³ Menges, Walter, Vogel & Bruch (2011)

⁴⁴ Ibid

2.3.2 Stimulating Growth in the Professional Capacities of Staff

This practice engages leaders directly, although sometimes not formally, in the professional development of their school colleagues. The changes schools are now routinely being asked to make places a premium on leaders undertaking this practice in a highly skilled way. For those leading schools with significant numbers of diverse and disadvantaged students, for example, a significant challenge often is to help staff adapt their instructional practices to better acknowledge and build on the types of social and intellectual capital that such students bring to school.

This practice, skillfully enacted, recognizes the many informal, as well as formal, ways in which professional development occurs. It also reflects current understandings of learning as constructed, social and situated. A considerable amount of the educational literature assumes such practices on the part of school leaders, most notably the literature on instructional leadership which places school leaders at the centre of instructional improvement efforts in their schools⁴⁵.

Leaders who successfully stimulate growth in the professional capacities of their school colleagues:

- Encourage staff to reflect on what they are trying to achieve with students and how they are doing it;
- Lead discussions about the relative merits of current and alternative practices⁴⁶;
- Challenge staff to re-examine the extent to which their practices contribute to the learning and well-being of all of their students;
- Facilitate opportunities for staff to learn from each other;
- Are a source of new ideas for staff learning;
- Encourage staff to pursue their own goals for professional learning;
- Encourage staff to develop and review their own professional growth goals and their relationship to school goals and priorities;
- Encourage staff to try new practices consistent with their own interests.

A recent, widely acknowledged, synthesis of research indicates that an especially productive way leaders stimulate the professional growth of teachers is by participating in teacher learning and development. As the authors of the review explain:

This leadership dimension is described as both promoting and participating because more is involved than just supporting or sponsoring other staff in their learning. The leader participates in the learning as leader, learner, or both. The contexts for such learning are both formal (staff meetings and professional development) and informal⁴⁷

⁴⁵ For example, Hallinger (2003)

⁴⁶ From Robinson et al (2009)

⁴⁷ Robinson, Hohepa & Lloyd (2009, p. 663)

2.3.3 *Modeling the School's Values and Practices*

Leading by example, or modeling, is associated with “authentic” approaches to leadership⁴⁸. Modeling can serve to demonstrate such productive practices as transparent decision making and such positive dispositions as confidence, optimism, resilience and consistency between words and deeds. To be an influential model, however, leaders need to be highly visible in their schools, a visibility associated with high quality interactions with both staff and students⁴⁹.

When leaders serve as models of appropriate behaviors and attitudes, they help build trust and respect among their colleagues. Being a visible presence in the school, especially at key times during the day, such as arrivals and dismissals, also helps nurture a safe, welcoming environment for students, parents and other community members.

In sum, leaders who successfully model their school's values and practices:

- Are highly visible in their schools;
- Are easily accessible to staff, parents and students;
- Have relatively frequent, meaningful, interactions with teachers, students and parents;
- Demonstrate the importance of continuous learning through visible engagement in their own professional learning;
- Exemplify, through their own actions, the school's core values and many of its desired practices.

2.3.4 *Building trusting relationships with and among staff, students and parents*

Trusting relationships foster both organizational effectiveness and efficiency. When people trust one another, they are more likely to take the risks needed to innovate and to make significant improvements to their practices. When people trust one another, decisions can be made without dysfunctional checks and balances introduced into the process. “Red tape” is kept to a minimum. A trusting organizational climate, it has been suggested, is a “boundary condition” on leadership influence. High levels of trust increase the likelihood that organizational members will act on helpful ideas and suggestions whereas low levels of trust cause them to doubt the intentions of their colleagues and waste time tracking one another's work⁵⁰.

The growing body of evidence about trust in schools suggests that it does make significant contributions to a positive school climate and to student learning⁵¹. This research also indicates that the trust teachers have in the administrative leaders of their schools is a function of a large handful of perceived leader characteristics, the most influential being leaders' competence, consistency, openness, respect for staff and integrity⁵².

⁴⁸ See Avolio & Gardner (2005) as an example

⁴⁹ Hallinger (2003) and Waters et al. (2003)

⁵⁰ Menges, Walter, Vogel & Bruch (2011)

⁵¹ Bryk & Schneider (2002)

⁵² Handford (2011)

Trusting relationships also enable staffs to engage in what Robinson and her colleagues refer to as “open-to-learning conversations”, or what have been termed “courageous conversations” in recent Ontario leadership guidelines. To engage in such conversations:

*leaders need the skills and values that will make it possible for them to respectfully give and receive the tough messages that are an inevitable part of the process of improving teaching and learning*⁵³.

Leaders who successfully build trusting relations, in sum:

- Are visibly competent when carrying out their tasks;
- Act in ways that consistently reflect the school’s core values and priorities;
- Demonstrate respect for staff, students and parents by listening to their ideas, being open to those ideas and genuinely considering their value;
- Encourage staff, students and parents to listen to one another’s ideas and genuinely consider their value;
- Create norms in the school which value constructive debate about best practices;
- Demonstrate respect, care and personal regard for students, staff and parents;
- Encourage staff, students and parents to demonstrate respect, care and personal regard for one another⁵⁴.

2.3.5 *Establishing productive working relationships with teacher federation representatives*

Neither school leaders nor local federation representatives play direct roles in establishing the contractual conditions governing teachers’ work. However, they are both on the “front line” of efforts to both interpret and implement those conditions. Establishing the working relationships necessary to successfully undertake this often challenging work depends on (a) establishing a shared commitment to advancing the learning and well-being of the school’s students, (b) a willingness to collaborate in sorting out the inevitable challenges which arise in making such advances and (c) mutual respect. Clearly, these conditions cannot be created unilaterally by school leaders. However, school leaders increase the likelihood of these conditions in their schools by:

- Explicitly including federation representatives (along with staff more generally) in processes for establishing goals for school improvement;
- Encouraging federation representatives to keep their members well-informed about their work with school leaders;
- Encouraging federation representatives to collaborate in determining how to implement labor contract provisions so as not to significantly impede school improvement work.

⁵³ Robinson et al (2009, p 47)

⁵⁴ An extensive meta-analysis of evidence by Roorda et al (2011), for example, demonstrated a significant impact of warm, empathetic teacher-student relationships on students’ feelings of security, autonomy and felt competence which in turn exercised a positive influence on students’ engagement in school and their achievement.

2.4 Developing the Organization to Support Desired Practices

School structures (such as timetables and PLCs), policies (on discipline, for example), routines and standard operating procedures (for example, about how teachers supervise recess and examinations) are all part of a school's infrastructure, and a significant source of staff members working conditions. Assisting staff to do their work efficiently and effectively is the infrastructure's purpose. But a school's infrastructure is also a significant source of its resistance to change, since the existing infrastructure is designed to support the existing work - not the new work. And that is why periodic redesign of the school's infrastructure is such an important part of leading the implementing of new practices. A school infrastructure misaligned with the practices considered desirable by the school significantly erodes the motivation staff have to implement those practices and stands in the way of staff making the best use of their expertise⁵⁵.

The six practices included in this section of the OLF help ensure the kind of periodic refinement of the school's infrastructure needed to keep it aligned with the school's improvement efforts.

2.4.1 *Building Collaborative Cultures and Distributing Leadership*

A large body of evidence has accumulated since the early 1980's which unambiguously supports the importance of collaborative cultures in schools as central to school improvement, the development of professional learning communities and the improvement of student learning⁵⁶. Additional evidence clearly indicates that leaders are able to build more collaborative cultures and suggests practices that accomplish this goal⁵⁷. For leaders striving to make their schools more inclusive, creating more positive collaborative and achievement-oriented cultures is a key task⁵⁸.

One means of fostering collaboration is to distribute leadership to others in the school and to support their efforts to enact that leadership. Leaders who distribute leadership through collaborative processes have been described as "curators of talent who motivate [their colleagues] to action rather than givers of directives and orders"⁵⁹. Distributed leadership has a significant impact on student learning⁶⁰.

The success of collaborative activity is determined by the capacity and motivation of collaborators along with opportunities for them to collaborate. Success also depends on prior conditions in the school. For example, a history of working together will sometimes build trust making further collaboration easier. Participative leadership theory and leader-member exchange theory are concerned with the nature and quality of collaboration in organizations and how to manage it productively. One recent study found that brief, spontaneous exchanges among staff

⁵⁵ Bandura's (1986) model of motivation includes people's beliefs about the supportiveness of their settings as a significant source of their motivation.

⁵⁶ For example, Little (1982); Louis & Kruse (1998); Rosenholtz & Simpson (1990)

⁵⁷ For example, Leithwood, Jantzi, & Dart (1990); Waters et al. (2003).

⁵⁸ West, Ainscow, & Stanford (2005).

⁵⁹ Kramer & Crespy (2011, p. 1025)

⁶⁰ Hallinger & Heck (2011); Heck & Hallinger (2009)

and between formal leaders and staff had significant effects on the collaborative climates if these communications signified openness to suggestions, as well as an expectation for collaboration⁶¹.

Leaders who are successful in building more collaborative cultures in their schools⁶²:

- Model collaboration in the conduct of their own work;
- Nurture mutual respect and trust among those involved in collaborating;
- Help develop the shared determination of group processes and outcomes;
- Help develop clarity about goals and roles for collaboration;
- Encourage a willingness to compromise among collaborators;
- Foster open and fluent communication among collaborators;
- Provide adequate and consistent resources in support of collaborative work;
- Involve staff in the design and implementation of important school decisions and policies;
- Provide staff with leadership opportunities and support them as they take on these opportunities.

2.4.2 Structuring the Organization to Facilitate Collaboration

This practice is common to virtually all conceptions of management and leadership practice. Organizational culture and structure are two sides of the same coin. Developing and sustaining collaborative cultures depends on putting in place complementary structures, typically something requiring leadership initiative.

Leaders who successfully enact this practice:

- Create timetables for teaching that maximize time on task for students;
- Provide regular opportunities and encouragement for teachers to work together on instructional improvement;
- Establish team and group structures for problem solving;
- Participate with staff in their collective instructional improvement work;⁶³
- Distribute leadership for selected tasks; and
- Engage teachers in making decisions that affect their instructional work.

2.4.3 Building Productive Relationships with Families and Communities.

This practice entails shifting the attention of school staffs from an exclusively inside-the-school focus to one which embraces a meaningful role for parents and a closer relationship with the larger community. This practice is an especially important part of what leaders do who are attempting to create more inclusive schools because, enacted skillfully, it brings school staffs into closer contact with many of those parents whose students have traditionally been underserved by their schools; it opens up ‘spaces’ in which the values, understandings, expectations and challenges faced by these parent can become better known and appreciated by staff.

⁶¹ See Kramer & Crespy (2011)

⁶² Many of the following practices are identified in Sheppard & Dibbon (2011)

⁶³ See Hadfield (2003); Hallinger & Heck (1998)

Building relations with families is encouraged by evidence demonstrating the very large contribution to student achievement of family or home characteristics (for example, parental expectations)⁶⁴, the increase in public accountability of schools to their communities through current educational accountability policies and the growing need for schools to build public support.

Leaders who successfully build productive parent and wider community relations⁶⁵:

- Create a school environment in which parents are welcomed, respected and valued as partners in their children's learning;
- Demonstrate the type of leadership which parents trust (leadership which is confident,, systematic and attentive to the details of the school's functioning);
- Develop staff commitment to engaging parents in the school;
- With staff, work directly with diverse families to help them provide their children with supports in the home that will contribute to their success at schools;
- Assist staff to better use the social and intellectual capital of students from diverse family backgrounds for instructional purposes in their classrooms;
- Encourage staff to adopt a broad view of what might be entailed in parent engagement, a view that permits more parents to be involved than would be possible if engagement meant only attendance at events in the school, for example: when needed, help connect families to the wider network of social services they may need.

2.4.4 Connecting the School to its Wider Environment.

School leaders typically spend significant amounts of time in contact with people outside of their schools providing advice, seeking information and advice, seeking supports for students with behavioral concerns and mental illness, staying in tune with policy changes, anticipating new pressures and trends likely to have an influence on their schools and the like. Meetings, informal conversations, phone calls, email exchanges and internet searches are examples of opportunities for accomplishing these purposes. Some of this work has been referred to as "political leadership"⁶⁶.

Leadership networks have become common recently because they offer relatively stable structures for testing out one's ideas, receiving "just-in-time" advice from respected peers and providing additional professional development opportunities for one's staff. Evidence about the value of such networks in the U.K. has been largely positive⁶⁷, a result largely replicated by five

⁶⁴ See Finn (1989), Mapp (2002) and Hattie (2009), for example. Evidence indicates that positive parental aspirations and expectations for their children's educational achievement have a strong relationship with children's actual achievement. The greater the support that families provide for their children's learning and educational progress, the more likely that their children will do well in school and continue on with their education.2 Parents need to hold high aspirations and expectations for their children, and schools need to work in partnership with parents so that the home and the school can share in these expectations and support learning. The positive results of a genuine partnership between parents and schools include improved student achievement, reduced absenteeism, positive student behaviour, and increased confidence among parents in their children's schooling.

⁶⁵ Much of this is based on a critical review of literature undertaken for the ministry by Leithwood (2006)

⁶⁶ Coleman (2011) uses this designation, for example.

⁶⁷ Earl & Katz (2010); Jackson (2002).

annual cycles of evaluation data about “principal learning teams” from Ontario’s own *Leading Student Achievement* project⁶⁸. Networks of school leaders within their own school systems are potentially important sources of system-wide leadership, while networks extended beyond the boundaries of school leaders’ own systems are potential sources of useful, “outside the local box”, ideas.

Leaders who successfully use these connections for school improvement purposes⁶⁹ develop and maintain connections with:

- other expert school and district leaders;
- those knowledgeable about policy developments in the province; and
- members of the educational research community

2.4.5 Maintaining a Safe and Healthy School Environment

Organizational management functions are often viewed as necessary but not closely associated with the success of a school’s improvement work. However, this view does not reflect OLF’s initial assumption about the potentially misleading distinction between “leadership” and “management”⁷⁰, nor does it reflect recent evidence demonstrating the significant contributions to student achievement made by organizational management functions⁷¹ enacted skillfully. This set of practices includes creating a safe and orderly environment, and maintaining the physical facilities of the school in good working order.

Early evidence about the importance of a safe, orderly environment for student learning, in particular, can be found in the first wave of “effective schools” research⁷² and the considerable evidence which has accumulated since those early studies continues to support claims about the contributions that safe and orderly school environments make to student learning. Recent research indicates that a safe, orderly and positive environment makes important contributions to the school’s climate when it is the company of high academic expectations and good student and teacher morale⁷³. A safe, orderly, healthy, and accepting environment is necessary for student success; it is an environment in which bullying and other forms of violent, aggressive or biased behavior are not tolerated.. Students cannot be expected to reach their potential in an environment where they feel insecure and intimidated.

⁶⁸ These data are available from the chair of the LSA project Steering team, Linda Massey, Ontario Principals’ Council.

⁶⁹ There is not much direct evidence to support the following initiatives. They are best thought of as implications from a small body of evidence. But see Yukl (1994, p 69).

⁷⁰ For additional arguments about this distinction, see Murphy (1988)

⁷¹ Grissom & Loeb’s (2011) study found more significant contributions to student achievement by the organizational management functions of principals than most other measured functions. Related evidence indicates that principals, who most actively recruit teachers with leadership potential to consider school administrative positions, are those who are particularly skilled in organizational management (Myung, Loeb & Horng, 2011). As the authors argue, “Principals effective at [organizational] management are able to look beyond the day-to-day needs of the school and position themselves to pursue the school’s long-term goals, of which identifying and supporting potential principals may be one” (p. 722).

⁷² For example, Teddlie (2010)

⁷³ This evidence is reviewed in Urick and Bowers (2011)

Considerable evidence now suggests that minimizing such behavior requires interventions which are:

multifaceted, implemented thoroughly, including professional development for teachers; and sustained in frequency and duration” ...[Such interventions should] facilitate young people’s development of social and cognitive competence, respect and tolerance across differences, inclusion of marginalized students and opportunities to be positively involved and to build strong relationships...⁷⁴

Leaders are key to the successful development and maintenance of safe, positive, and healthy environments. They promote such environments by:

- Securing their schools’ physical facilities from unwanted intrusions and intruders;
- Maintaining the physical facilities in a safe, healthy and attractive condition;
- Communicating standards for non-violent behavior and upholding those standards in an equitable manner;
- Empowering adults in the school to play a leadership role in promoting a positive school climate and model appropriate behaviour;
- Implementing and monitoring the use of appropriate discipline practices not only in classrooms but in all other locations within their schools;
- Developing, with staff and students, processes to identify and resolve conflicts quickly and effectively;
- Providing opportunities for staff and students to learn about effective conflict resolution strategies.

2.4.6 Allocating resources in support of the school’s vision and goals⁷⁵

Resources available to schools in the province are not always distributed either equally or equitably, in spite of uniform base funding of schools by government. This is mostly because of parental income disparities and the vast differences in fundraising potential among schools even within the same school systems, as a result. But in spite of these disparities, Ontario schools are resource rich in comparison with almost any other educational jurisdiction in the world. In this context, the challenge is primarily one of getting the most educational value for students from the resources already available. Addressing this challenge entails careful alignment of resources in support of the school’s improvement priorities.

Leaders who are successfully in addressing this challenge:

- Secure sufficient resources of all types (e.g., staff expertise, curriculum material, time) needed to carry out the instructional work of the school;
- Manage efficient budgetary processes;
- Provide sustained funding for their schools’ improvement priorities;
- Distribute resources of all types in ways that are closely aligned with the school’s improvement priorities;

⁷⁴ Bickmore (2011, p 651)

⁷⁵ Robinson et al (2009) included this among the practices with significant effects on students.

- Revisit and realign the nature, amount, and alignment of resources as priorities for school improvement change.
- Ensure effective oversight and accountability of resources to support priorities

2.5 Improving the Instructional Program

2.5.1 Staffing the instructional program.

Teacher quality is widely judged to be the most powerful influence on student achievement. Studies of teacher quality have measured it in a variety ways, most only approximating the actual quality of instruction experienced by students⁷⁶. One recent award winning study demonstrated, nevertheless, that even proxy measures of such quality are closely associated with gains in student achievement. The author of this large study summed up his findings as follows:

...collective teacher quality was positively related to school achievement levels in reading and math. Second, the strength of the relationship was conditional on school demographic composition; for example, the positive relationship in reading was enhanced in school contexts where targeted student subgroups (e.g., low socioeconomic students, students receiving English services) were more highly clustered. Third, collective teacher quality was related to increased student growth rates in math. Fourth, within schools, higher teacher quality was associated with reduced gaps in student learning rates associated with social class and race/ethnicity⁷⁷.

Teacher quality can be developed, of course, and most of the practices included in the *Building Relationships and Developing People* domain of the OLF serve that purpose. But school leaders have frequent opportunities to bring other teachers into their schools, for example, to replace teachers who take on other roles, move to other schools and retire. Recruiting and selecting teachers with the interest and capacity to further the school's efforts is a key school improvement task in any school but retaining skilled staff is especially important for successfully leading schools in challenging circumstances⁷⁸. It is struggling students, in particular, who benefit from high quality instruction⁷⁹.

Criteria used by effective school leaders when selecting staff for their schools include:

- Commitment to the ongoing improvement of their own instructional capacities;
- Extensive pedagogical content knowledge⁸⁰ and/or the potential to acquire such knowledge;

⁷⁶ But see Kelcey (2011) for evidence that teachers' actual knowledge of reading instruction has significant effects on students' reading achievement, especially reading comprehension.

⁷⁷ In this study by Ron Heck (2007), teacher quality was measured as the percentage of teachers at each school who were fully certified, passed content knowledge tests, and met state performance standards.

⁷⁸ Gray (2000)

⁷⁹ See Hanusheck (1992) and Babu & Mendro (2003) for example.

⁸⁰ Pedagogical content knowledge combines knowledge of subject matter content with knowledge about how best to teach that content to students.

- Willingness and ability to collaborate with other staff members for purposes of instructional and school improvement;
- General agreement with the school’s goals and priorities and a willingness to help accomplish those goals and priorities.

Retaining skilled teachers is as important as hiring them to begin with. Substantial evidence now indicates that the behavior of school leaders is the “working condition” exercising the greatest influence over teachers’ decisions to stay or leave a school. The most recent, and among the most rigorous studies of teacher retention, demonstrated that:

...for all three levels of schooling [elementary, middle, secondary] the higher the perceived quality of school leadership, the less likely teachers are either to plan to leave or actually to leave the school⁸¹

The pattern of leadership which persuaded teachers to stay in their schools was “fully consistent with a transformational model of school leadership”. This was a broad conception of leadership (including many of the practices included in other sections of the OLF) rather than one dominated by a small set of practices. These practices include:

- providing professional development and other forms of support for teachers;
- giving teachers more roles (distributing leadership);
- providing time for collaboration and planning;
- creating a shared vision for instruction;
- building trusting relationships among staff and with school leaders.

In this study, while the quality of leadership had the largest influence on teachers’ desires to move schools or not, only at the high school level did high quality leadership protect against teachers leaving the profession entirely.

2.5.2 *Providing instructional support.*

Effective leaders provide both indirect and direct forms of instructional support to their teacher colleagues. All of the practices described in the OLF to this point provide indirect instructional support for teachers, for example: the clear defensible and share goals created through practices in the *Direction Setting* domain clarify the purposes for instruction; the knowledge and skills teachers need to improve their instruction are addressed through practices included in the *Building Relationships and Developing People* domain; practices included in the *Developing the Organization to Sustain Desired Practices* domain create key working conditions for both encouraging and enabling instructional improvement. The small amount of evidence relevant to this matter suggests that such indirect forms of instructional support make a greater contribution to instructional improvement than more direct forms of support⁸².

The more direct forms of instructional support identified in recent research include, for example, “supervising and evaluating instruction”, coordinating the curriculum” and providing resources

⁸¹ Ladd (2011, p 256).

⁸² See Hallinger (2003) and Grissom & Loeb (2011)

in support of curriculum, instruction and assessment activity⁸³. For leaders of schools in challenging contexts, focusing on teaching and learning is essential⁸⁴. This includes controlling behavior, boosting self-esteem and talking and listening to pupils. It also includes urging pupils, parents and teachers to put a strong emphasis on pupil achievement. Such an “academic climate” or emphasis makes significant contributions to achievement⁸⁵.

In sum, leadership practices which contribute relatively directly to instructional improvement include:

- Actively overseeing the instructional program;
- Coordinating what is taught across subjects and grades to avoid unnecessary overlap while providing needed reinforcement and extension of learning goals;
- Observing in classrooms and providing constructive feedback that is useful to teachers;
- Providing adequate preparation time for teachers;
- Being a useful source of advice to teachers about how to solve classroom problems;
- Engaging teachers in observing effective instructional practices among colleagues in their own school, as well as in other schools;
- Participating with staff in their instructional improvement work.

2.5.3 *Monitoring student learning and school improvement progress*⁸⁶

School leaders are now expected routinely to use systematically-collected evidence to justify their claims and inform decision making in their schools⁸⁷. This expectation includes having and using a broad array of evidence about student learning as well as the status of school and classroom conditions likely to influence student learning. Systematically collected evidence about such things is expected to be a supplement to, rather than replacement for, the vast amounts of information encountered “naturally” during the course of working in schools.

The best available evidence indicates that school leaders who make effective use of systematically collected data:

- Assist their staffs in understanding the importance of student assessment “for, of, and as learning”;
- Collaborate with staff during the process of data interpretation;
- Use multiple sources of evidence when diagnosing student progress;
- Award priority to identifying students most in need of additional support;

⁸³ Both Hallinger (2003) and Waters et al. (2003) identify these practices.

⁸⁴ West et al. (2005)

⁸⁵ For example, see Urick & Bowers (2011)

⁸⁶ Waters et al. analysis associated leadership effects on students with leader monitoring and evaluating functions, especially those focused on student progress. The purposeful use of data is reported by West et al. (2005) to be a central explanation for effective leadership in failing schools. Hallinger’s (2003) model includes a set of practices labeled “monitoring student progress”. Monitoring operations and environment is one of Yukl’s (1994) eleven effective managerial practices. And Gray (2000) reports that tracking student progress is a key task for leaders of schools in challenging circumstances.

⁸⁷ See Ladd (1996) for example.

- Incorporate explicit data use in almost all decisions about student learning and school improvement;
- Examine trends in student achievement over time (one or more years), rather than just at one point in time, when assessing student learning;
- Collect and use data about the status of those classroom and school conditions serving as the focus of their school improvement efforts.

These leaders also develop conditions which enable effective data use in their schools including:

- Time for staff members to meet in order to analyze, interpret and act on results;
- Suitable professional development for teachers about how to collect, interpret and use systematically-collected evidence in their classrooms and schools;
- An organizational culture which supports explicit data use in almost all decision making;
- Partnerships with those outside the school, when needed, who are able to assist in data interpretation and use.

2.5.4. Buffering staff from distractions to their work

A long line of research has reported the contribution to organizational effectiveness of leaders preventing staff from being pulled in directions incompatible with agreed on goals. This buffering function acknowledges the open nature of schools and the constant bombardment of staff with expectations from parents, the media, special interest groups and the government. Internal buffering is also helpful, for example, buffering teachers from excessive administrative activities in their classes that erode instructional time. One recent study⁸⁸, for example, found that among ten measured leadership practices, protecting teachers' instructional time was the only practice with significant effects on both student achievement and collective teacher efficacy.

Leaders who are successful in buffering the instructional time of teachers:

- Create and enforce consistent, school-wide discipline policies;
- Minimize daily disruptions to classroom instructional time;
- Implement a systematic procedure for deciding how best to respond to initiatives from outside the school;
- Develop, with staff, guidelines to govern the amount of time teachers spend on non-instructional and out-of-school activities.
- Regularly assess the contribution of all out-of-classroom activities to the learning priorities of students.

2.6 Securing Accountability

The world-wide movement to hold schools more publicly accountable for student learning has been well established for more than a decade by now. This policy trend has three distinct features. First, it shines a light on the learning of students who, in the past, were often not

⁸⁸ Francera & Bliss (2011)

successful and were sometimes neglected by schools. Second, it defines the results of formal tests, especially tests of literacy and math, as the pre-eminent yardstick by which student success is to be measured. Third, it identifies those in school and district leadership roles as the people to be held most visibly accountable for whatever achievement is measured by those tests.

What do leaders need to do to secure the kind of accountability defined by these features of current policy? A compelling case has been made that leaders need attend to (a) building a sense of “internal” or personal accountability for achieving their schools’ goals and priorities on the part of staff members, as well as (b) meeting a set of external conditions for such accountability⁸⁹.

2.6.1 Building staff members’ sense of internal accountability

While school and district leaders have become the face of public school accountability, they depend on the capacities and senses of responsibility of their colleagues to accomplish the goals for which they are being held accountable. Leaders enhance staff members internal sense of accountability for achieving the school’s goals, in part, by enacting those practices typically referred to as “transformational” and described in earlier sections of the OLF. These are practices which build a shared sense of commitment to a compelling vision for the school, connect that vision to staff members’ personal/professional goals, speak to their values and provide them with experiences which are professionally rewarding.

In addition, leaders help build a sense of internal accountability for achieving their school’s vision and goals on the part of their colleagues by:

- Promoting collective responsibility and accountability for student achievement and well-being⁹⁰;
- Insisting on the use of evidence that is of “high quality”⁹¹;
- Regularly engaging staff in the analysis of such evidence about the learning progress of all students;
- Assessing one’s own contributions to school achievements and taking account of feedback from others;
- Participating actively in personal external evaluation and making adjustments to better meet expectations and goals;
- Helping staff make connections between school goals and ministry goals in order to strengthen commitment to school improvement efforts.

2.6.2 Meeting the demands for external accountability

⁸⁹ See Elmore (2005) and MacBeath and Townsend (2011)

⁹⁰ From Robinson, Hohepa & Lloyd (2009)

⁹¹ The quality of quantitative evidence can be judged by conventional assessments of its reliability and validity. Qualitative evidence, to be considered “high quality”, should have been collected through some systematic process, be available in its original form, and subjected to collaborative interpretation.

Leaders will be increasingly successful in meeting external accountability requirements as they:

- Clearly define individual staff accountabilities in terms that are understood, agreed to and can be rigorously reviewed and evaluated;
- Measure and monitor teacher and leader effectiveness using evidence about changes in student achievement and well-being;
- Align school targets with board and provincial targets;
- Provide an accurate and transparent account of the school's performance to all school stakeholders (e.g., ministry, board, parents, community);
- Create organizational structures which reflect the school's values and ensure that management systems, structures and processes reflect legal requirements.

Leadership practices aimed at securing accountability aim to both improve school performance and to sustain and further develop confidence in public schooling among parents. Direct experience with schools makes a significant contribution to such confidence. For example, parents typically rate their own children's schools quite high⁹²; effective, compassionate teachers, along with competent and caring school leaders, are the most likely sources of this confidence. So enacting the school leadership practices captured not only in this section of the OLF but other sections, as well, is likely to make significant contributions to parents' confidence, at least.

Less direct forms of information about public schools, often sensationalized information presented about schools in the media, do not produce the same high levels of confidence in public schooling. While school-level leaders have occasional opportunities to influence the nature of such information, system-level leaders are better positioned to proactively build confidence in schools among members of the public with no direct relationships with schools.

3. Characteristics of Successful Schools: *The K – 12 School Effectiveness Framework*

The K-12 School Effectiveness Framework identifies evidence-based indicators of successful practice in a number of components of effective schools:

- Component 1: Assessment for, as and of learning
- Component 2: School and classroom leadership
- Component 3: Student voice

⁹² For example, the Gallup Poll on Education conducted annually in the U.S. (e.g., Bushaw & Lopez, 2011) has consistently reported such high ratings for decades, and education polls conducted in Ontario by David Livingstone and his colleagues (e.g., Livingstone & Hart, 1985) demonstrate similar results. Both sources of data also report much less favorable impressions about schools with which respondents have had no direct experience.

- Component 4: Curriculum, teaching and learning
- Component 5: Programs and Pathways
- Component 6: Home, school and community partnerships

The SEF is a key resource to assist in precise and intentional school improvement planning focused on the achievement of all students. It is not a checklist, it is instead a tool and an opportunity to engage staff in deep and purposeful dialogue about their school and students.

The latest version of the K-12 *School Effectiveness Framework* can be found here:

http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/Framework_english.pdf

The School System

As with the School-level part of the OLF, this System-level part includes two sections. The first section, adopting a conception of leadership as an organizational property, describes the characteristics of “high-performing” school systems while the second section describes successful practices enacted by system-level individuals and small groups exercising leadership.

Evidence used to identify the features described in both of these sections were provided by recent syntheses of research along with the results of a multi-methods study of high-performing school systems conducted during the 2010-11 school year in Ontario⁹³. This provincial study identified four domains of school system characteristics associated with improvements in student learning and well-being, as well as system-level leadership practices helpful in developing those characteristics⁹⁴.

4. Characteristics of Successful School Systems: *The District Effectiveness Framework (DEF)*

4.1 Introduction

The *District Effectiveness Framework* (DEF) describes features of school systems which make positive contributions to growth in student learning and well-being. Evidence to justify the features included in the DEF were provided by recent syntheses of research⁹⁵ and the results of a multi-methods study of high-performing school systems conducted during the 2010-11 school year in Ontario and alluded to in the previous section⁹⁶. Included in the DEF are four domains of

⁹³ Detailed descriptions of this study can be found in Leithwood (2011).

⁹⁴ While the school-level and system-level parts of the OLF are parallel in structure, considerably more evidence was available about school- as compared with system- level leadership.

⁹⁵ Togneri & Anderson (2003); Leithwood (2010); Rorrer, Skrla & Scheurich (2008).

⁹⁶ Detailed descriptions of this study can be found in Leithwood (2011).

school system characteristics associated with improvements in student learning and well-being each of which includes two to four more specific characteristics.

4.2 Core Processes

The *Core Processes* domain encompasses characteristics of school systems that have the most direct effect on the quality of teaching and learning. Considerable evidence now indicates that such processes include the school system's beliefs and vision for students; this vision is widely shared and understood⁹⁷, as well as being focused on both raising the achievement of all students and closing the gap in achievement from the most and least successful students⁹⁸. Also included among the *Core Processes* is the school system's curriculum and instruction. High performing school systems work with schools to develop and/or implement highly engaging instruction for all students, instruction that develops both "tool skills" and deep understanding of "big ideas"; in such systems, curricula, instruction and assessments are carefully aligned⁹⁹. Finally, high performing districts have effective information management systems and provide considerable support for their schools in using systematically collected data for instructional planning and school improvement purposes¹⁰⁰

4.2.1 System Directions (Mission, Vision and Goals)

- High-performing school systems have widely-shared sets of beliefs and visions about student learning and well-being that have been transparently developed with the engagement of multiple school and system stakeholders and that fall within the parameters set by the province;
- The beliefs and visions held by members of these school systems include a focus on raising the achievement bar, closing the achievement gap, and nurturing student engagement and well-being;
- These beliefs and visions for students are understood and shared by all staff.

4.2.2 Curriculum and Instruction

- The school system strongly supports schools' efforts to implement curricula that foster students' deep understandings about "big ideas", as well as to develop the basic skills students need to acquire such understandings;
- System staff and school staff work effectively together to help provide all students with engaging forms of instruction;
- System staff and school staff work effectively together to help establish ambitious but realistic student performance standards;
- The school system has aligned all elements of school programs and resources (e.g., curriculum, instruction, assessment, staff, budget);
- The school system's instructional improvement work includes teachers and assists them in developing sophisticated understandings of powerful instruction for students;

⁹⁷ Togneri & Anderson (2003)

⁹⁸ Louis et al (2010).

⁹⁹ See Darling-Hammond et al. (2003), for example.

¹⁰⁰ Ikemoto & Marsh (2007)

- The school system’s work with schools to align curriculum, instruction, assessment and teaching resources is extensive, ongoing and involves stakeholders.

4.2.3 Uses of Evidence

High performing school systems:

- Have efficient and effective information management systems;
- Provide schools with relevant evidence about their performance;
- Assist schools in using evidence to improve their performance;
- Create collaborative structures and opportunities for the interpretation of evidence in schools;
- Call on expertise from outside the school system for help with data interpretation when needed;
- Use appropriate evidence for accounting to stakeholders;
- Make effective use of existing research to guide policy making and planning.

4.3 Supporting Conditions

Supporting Conditions, the second DEF domain, encompasses organizational improvement processes, the school system’s approach to professional development (PD), and the alignment of budget, personnel policies and organizational structures to support the system’s vision and goals for students. Successful school systems allocate significant resources to the ongoing learning of their staffs and devote a substantial portion of the time used for meetings to professional learning rather than administrative routines. PD opportunities are often job-embedded, carefully aligned to support the system’s priorities and reflect contemporary understandings of how adults learn (Pritchard & Marshall, 2002).

Successful organizational improvement processes are limited to the pursuit of only a small number of goals at the same time, usually proceed in manageable stages and are guided by explicit and well-tested frameworks, policies and practices, as well as widely shared goals that permit local adaptation (e.g., Louis et al, 2010). All stakeholders have clearly defined roles to play in this approach to organizational improvement. Established structures and procedures are maintained and built on. Care is taken to ensure the continuity and extension of the system’s core values and ongoing efforts are made to ensure that budget allocations, personnel policies and district structures enable staff efforts to approximate its vision and goals for students.

4.3.1 Professional Development

In high-performing school systems:

- Time spent in meetings of teachers and principals is largely devoted to professional learning. Administrative matters are dealt with primarily through other forums and mechanisms;
- Most professional development is carefully aligned with system – wide and school improvement initiatives;

- Differentiated professional development opportunities are provided in response to the needs of individual schools, administrators and teachers;
- Extensive opportunities are provided for both teachers and administrators to further develop their expertise;
- Schools provide time for collaborative work on instructional improvement initiatives. Schools are provided with the resources they need to provide this time and leaders are provided with training in how best to facilitate such work;
- All system-sponsored professional development is closely aligned with the best evidence about how adults learn.

4.3.2 Organizational Improvement Processes

In high performing school systems:

- The systems proceed in manageable stages and use the early stages as learning opportunities;
- The system's approaches to improvement are relatively coherent; a small number of key improvement goals are consistently pursued over sustained periods of time;
- Schools are not overloaded with excessive numbers of initiatives; new initiatives are reviewed for a alignment with system priorities and the number of initiatives is managed so that schools are not overloaded;
- Considerable effort is made to build the capacities needed by school staffs for successful school improvement;
- Improvement efforts in schools are guided by explicit and well-tested frameworks, policies and practices, as well as widely shared goals that permit local adaptation. All stakeholders have clearly defined roles to play in this approach to school improvement;
- The system integrates new initiatives into existing routines and practices; established structures and procedures are maintained and built on and care is taken to create continuity and extension of core values.

4.3.3 Alignment

Improvements in student learning and well-being are nurtured when the school system:

- Has effective stewardship of resources through a systematic and ongoing process to continuously align its budget with board-wide strategic goals to support student success;
- Has a systematic and ongoing process to continuously align its personnel policies and procedures with goals for students;
- Has a systematic and ongoing process to continuously align its organizational structures with staff's instructional improvement work;
- Explicitly acknowledges provincial priorities and aligns its initiatives with them in locally meaningful ways;
- Allocates adequate amounts of both the time and money for the professional development of leaders, teachers and those in support roles.

4.4. Approaches to Leadership Development

Approaches to leadership development, the third DEF domain, encompasses development of the system's professional, as well as elected (trustee) leaders. Approaches to professional leadership development¹⁰¹ are concerned not only with procedures for identifying, recruiting, selecting and appraising both school and district-level leaders but also with the quality of their implementation. Effective leadership at both school and system levels is instructionally sophisticated and demonstrates a locally appropriate enactment of the practices encompassed by the *Ontario Leadership Framework*. The coordinated distribution of leadership across both formal and informal leadership roles in the system (e.g., Leithwood, Mascall & Strauss, 2009) is also endorsed by the DEF.

The leadership of elected trustees includes helping to communicate the district vision and goals for students in the wider community, keeping the learning and wellbeing of students at the core of the board's decision making and aligning policies and financial resources around that core (e.g. Land, 2003).

4.4.1 Approaches to Professional Leadership Development

High performance in a school system is encouraged when:

- The school system has well-designed and carefully implemented procedures for identifying, recruiting, selecting and appraising school-level leaders;
- The school system implements procedures for transferring school-level leaders that does no harm and, whenever possible, adds value to improvement efforts underway in schools;
- The school system assigns the most skilled leaders in the system to the schools that are most in need of improvement ;
- The school system encourages school-level leaders, when useful, to supplement their own capacities with system-level expertise;
- System leaders expect principals to be knowledgeable about the quality of their teachers' instruction; this is a central criterion for selecting school leaders and for their performance appraisal;
- System leaders keep both the community and the central office staff focused on learning and they support principals and teachers in their efforts to improve instruction and stimulate high levels of learning among all students. The system assumes responsibility for significantly improving instructional leadership in schools;
- The school system expects the behavior of both system- and school-level leaders to reflect the practices identified in the Ontario Leadership Framework, as well as such other practices as might be deemed critical for local school system purposes;
- The school system encourages coordinated forms of leadership distribution throughout the school system and its schools.

¹⁰¹ In the framework, the term "professional leadership" is used primarily in reference to those in formal school and district administrative leadership roles such as principals, vice principals, superintendents and other central office "line" staff.

4.4.2 Approaches to the Development of Elected Leaders¹⁰²

Growth in student achievement and well-being is encouraged when the elected board of trustees:

- Participates with its senior staff in assessing community values and interests and incorporating them into a the school system’s mission and vision for students;
- Helps create a climate which engages teachers, administrators, parents and the wider community in developing and supporting the vision;
- Helps create a climate of excellence that makes achieving the vision possible;
- Uses the system’s beliefs and vision for student learning and well-being as the foundation for strategic planning and ongoing system evaluation;
- Focuses most policy making on the improvement of student learning and well-being consistent with the system’s mission and vision;
- Develops policies and supports staff decisions aimed at providing rich curricula and engaging forms of instruction for all students and eliminating those that do not;
- Elected leaders support productive relationships among senior staff, school staffs, community stakeholders and provincial education officials ;
- Provides systematic orientation opportunities for new members and ongoing training for existing members;
- Develops and sustains productive working relationships among members of the elected board;
- Respects the role of director and senior staff in their responsibilities for school system administration
- Holds the director accountable for improving teaching and learning in the school system;
- Holds its individual members accountable for supporting decisions of the board, as a whole, once those decisions have been made.

4.5 Relationships

Relationships is the fourth and final DEF domain; these are relationships within the central office and between the central office and its schools, parents, local community groups and the Ministry of Education. Evidence indicates that in successful systems, central office roles are interconnected, work is undertaken collaboratively in the service of a widely shared set of purposes. Communication among staff is frequent and cordial. School staffs often participate in system decisions, are in frequent contact with central office staff for support and assistance (Togneri & Anderson, 2003).

Communication throughout the system and within schools is nurtured by structures which encourage collaborative work (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003). The school system encourages its schools to engage with parents in both the home and school and helps staffs become more skilled in parent engagement; schools are held accountable for developing productive working relationships with parents (Gordon & Louis, in press). Local community groups are routinely

¹⁰² These practices are not meant to be a list of duties and responsibilities of trustees as these are covered in the *Education Act Student Achievement and School Board Governance Act*, and regulations. Instead, the practices in the DEF are meant to support the board of trustees in carrying out its mandate. The *Acts* provide the “what” and the DEF suggests the “how”.

consulted and recognized for their contribution and support. The school system is in regular and two-way communication with the ministry, encourages ministry collaboration in achieving board goals and directions, and has a multi-year plan that explicitly integrates provincial and board priorities (Louis et al, 2010).

4.5.1 Internal System and School Relationships

A school system's performance is enhanced when:

- Central office roles are interconnected, work is undertaken collaboratively in the service of a widely shared set of purposes; communication among staff is frequent and cordial;
- School staffs often participate in system decisions, are in frequent contact with central office staff for support and assistance; central office staff are in schools frequently;
- Networks and authentic professional learning communities are well established at both school and system levels and have become an established way of solving problems and taking care of other business.

4.5.2 Relationships with Local Community Groups

In high performing school systems:

- Community groups are routinely recognized for their contribution and support and consulted on almost all decisions affecting the community;
- School system staff are regularly members of community groups themselves;
- Relevant expertise located in community groups are used as instructional resources in schools;
- Relationships with these groups are carefully nurtured as a means of building community support for publically funded education.

4.5.3 Relationships with Parents

High performance is more likely when school systems:

- Provide school staffs with helpful opportunities to acquire the capacities needed to productively engage parents in schools;
- Provide school staffs with helpful opportunities to acquire the capacities they need to assist parents in creating conditions for their children's learning in the home and at school;
- Have a formal policy on parent engagement and regularly monitor the extent to which that policy is being implemented in their schools; school staffs and parents are asked for evidence as part of such monitoring.

4.5.4 Relationships with the Ministry of Education

High performance is nurtured when the school system:

- Communicates regularly with the ministry, both formally and informally, about school system goals and directions;
- Clarifies with the ministry how it can be of most help to the school system;
- Encourages ministry collaboration in achieving school system goals and directions;
- Provides feedback to the ministry about the relevance of its initiatives to school system goals and directions;
- Supplements government initiatives, when needed, in order to increase their local impact. Leadership teams in schools (e.g., PLCs) consider how to implement provincial initiatives in order to get the best results for the school and its students;
- Has a multi-year plan that explicitly integrates provincial and school system priorities.

4.5.5 Relationships with Teacher Federations

School systems are more successful when their relationships with professional federations and unions include:

- System and federation/union leaders sharing the same vision for student learning;
- Provision of time and space for professional federation leaders to participate in planning system and school improvement efforts;
- System and school leaders working with federations and unions to build trusting relationships;
- Federation and union leaders keeping their members well-informed about their work with school and system leaders;
- Examination of labor contracts to see that they support school improvement and increased student learning.

5. System-level Leadership Practices

5.1 Introduction

Almost all of the practices described in the school-level leadership section of the OLF are part of successful system-level leadership, as well. The context for most system-level leadership is clearly different, however, and that context often requires qualitatively different enactments of the same practices to be successful. For example, system-level leaders typically engage in *Direction-setting* practices with the participation of many more stakeholder groups than do school-level leaders. Their efforts to *Develop People* encompass not only teaching staff but school-level leaders, as well. The relationships to be developed by system-level leaders much more directly include those with elected trustees and the Ministry of Education officials than is the case with school-level leaders.

Unlike school-level leadership, *Organizational Development* work for system leaders must be concerned with roles and responsibilities of central office staff, as well as policies and procedures governing the actions of virtually all system staff. And *Improving the Instructional Program* has to be done, for the most part, at “arm’s length”, mediated by many more conditions than is the case for school-level leaders, hence more complex. As a final example, the challenge

of *Securing Accountability* is also more complex for system- as compared with school-level leaders because of the sheer numbers of people such accountability implies. So the same basic practices outlined for school-level leadership capture a large proportions of the practices required for successful system-level leadership, as well. But not all.

Leadership practices described in the earlier section of the OLF, then, are equally useful for both school and system-level leaders but the enactment of those practices are likely to differ often in qualitatively different ways. This part of the OLF, however, adds to those common leadership practices a set of at least partly unique practices demanded of system-level leaders if they are to be successful.

The provincial study which developed and tested the DEF identified “implications” for system leaders aiming to develop those characteristics included in the four DEF domains. This section of the OLF describes successful system-level leadership practices which were identified by combining these implications with a synthesis of other evidence about successful system-level leadership practices. This additional evidence included:

- one recent meta-analysis of empirical research about successful system-level leadership¹⁰³;
- a small handful of single, original studies of such leadership published after the meta-analysis;
- a recent Ontario study of the roles of Superintendents and Directors of Education¹⁰⁴;
- system-level leadership standards developed by three Canadian provinces¹⁰⁵, three Ontario school systems¹⁰⁶, three U.S. national associations¹⁰⁷, and four U.S. state departments of education¹⁰⁸.

The rationale for including leadership standards in the evidence base used to develop this section of the OLF reflects the relatively modest amount of empirical research reported about successful system-level leadership, as compared with school –level leadership. Leadership standards, it should be noted, however, are a quite different form of “evidence” as compared with the results of conventional research studies. Typically, standards developers aim to synthesize the results of available research, as well as professional experience, in a form easily accessible to their audiences. While the outcomes of their efforts rarely conflict with the results of existing research, those outcomes sometimes incorporate practices in addition to those justified by such research.

System-level leadership practices identified in the four sources of evidence identified above are captured by the practices described in this section, along with the practices (suitably enacted) described in the School-level leadership section of the OLF. The four domains of the *District*

¹⁰³ Waters & Marzano (2006)

¹⁰⁴ *Reach Every Student* (February 25, 2008), Final report for the Ontario Ministry of Education prepared by the Council of Ontario Directors of Education.

¹⁰⁵ British Columbia, Alberta (2 sets), and Saskatchewan.

¹⁰⁶ Peel District School Board, Toronto District School Board, and Trillium Lakelands District School Board.

¹⁰⁷ American Association of School Administrators, National Policy Board for Educational Administration, National Council of Professors of Educational Administration

¹⁰⁸ North Carolina, Ohio, and Texas

Effectiveness Framework (DEF) serve as organizers for this description of successful practices unique to system-level leadership.

5.2 Improving Core Processes

Core Processes include the school system's vision, mission and goals, a rigorous curriculum implemented with powerful forms of instruction, and uses of systematically collected evidence to inform decisions.

System-level leaders nurture the development of these processes by:

- Spending whatever time it takes to ensure that the mission, vision and goals (directions) of the system are widely known, understood and shared by all members of their organizations;
- Encouraging participation of the elected board in setting broad goals for its use in fulfilling its policy-setting and policy-monitoring responsibilities.
- Regularly reporting to the board progress in achieving these broad goals;
- Insisting on the use of the system's directions as fundamental criteria for virtually all decisions: system leaders are the chief "stewards" of those directions;
- Insisting on the use of the best available research and other systematically collected evidence to inform decisions wherever possible;
- Building their system's capacity and disposition for using systematically-collected data to inform as many decisions as possible. This includes training principals and staff on the use of data and research literature to sustain decision-making;
- Articulating, demonstrating and modeling the system's goals, priorities, and values to staffs when visiting schools;
- Developing and implementing board and school improvement plans interactively and collaboratively with school leaders;
- Making flexible, adaptive use of provincial initiatives and frameworks, ensuring that they contribute to, rather than detract from, accomplishing system goals and priorities.

5.3 Creating and Aligning Supporting Conditions

Supporting Conditions, aimed at enabling the Core Processes, include both school and system improvement processes, the provision of professional development, and the alignment of system policies and procedures in support of its' mission and goals.

Successfully developing these supporting conditions depends on system leaders:

- Creating structures and norms within their systems to encourage regular, reciprocal and extended deliberations about improvement progress within and across schools, as well as across the system as a whole. These structures and norms should result in deeply interconnected networks of school and system leaders working together on achieving the system's directions.

- Using the networks that are created as central mechanism for the professional development of school-level leaders.
- Regularly monitoring the alignment of the system’s policies and procedures. Refinements of directions or changes in improvement processes, for example, may well prompt the need for some re-alignment of policies, procedures, and the allocation of resources.

5.4 Refining Approaches to Leadership Development

Approaches to Leadership Development encompass both the system’s professional and elected (trustee) leaders. System leaders contribute to the development of professional leadership across their systems through their influence on the methods used for identifying, recruiting, selecting, transferring and appraising both school and district -level leaders.

System leaders will be increasingly successful in improving the professional leadership of their colleagues by:

- Using the best available evidence about successful leadership as a key source of the criteria used for recruiting, selecting, developing and appraising professional leaders¹⁰⁹;
- Regularly implementing, with fidelity, well-developed leadership appraisal processes serving both formative and summative purposes;
- Allowing competent school leaders to remain in their schools for significant periods of time¹¹⁰;
- Providing opportunities within the system, for aspiring and existing leaders to improve their leadership capacities¹¹¹;
- Developing realistic plans for leadership succession;
- Modeling the practices, dispositions, and habits valued by the system on the part of its’ leaders.

System leaders successfully develop the leadership of the elected board by helping the board:

- Communicate the system’s vision and goals for students to the wider community;
- Keep the learning and well-being of students at the core of the board’s decision making;
- Align its policies and financial resources around achieving the system’s vision and goals for students¹¹²;
- Avoid significant involvement in the day-to-day operations of the system;
- Establish productive collegial working relationships with the elected board¹¹³;
- Access productive professional development for its members.

¹⁰⁹ The OLF is intended to be the most accessible and reliable source of these criteria.

¹¹⁰ Frequent leadership turnover has significant negative effects on a school’s ability to improve its’ student’s achievement.

¹¹¹ For example, PD, mentoring, job shadowing and leader networks.

¹¹² See Land (2002)

¹¹³ For evidence about the contributions of such “bonding” see Saatcioglu et al (2011)

5.5 Building Productive Relationships

Five sets of relationships are crucial for system leaders to nurture: internal system and system-school relationships; relationships between the system and parents; relationships between the systems and external (mostly local) community groups; relationships with the Ministry of Education; and relationships with teacher federations.

These relationships become increasingly productive when system leaders:

- Encourage and model relationships between system and school-level leaders that are reciprocal, collaborative, and highly interactive;
- Stimulate high levels of interaction among school leaders. These interactions should include all school leaders and be driven by a shared sense of responsibility among school leaders for system improvement;
- Mostly provide support for schools' own parent engagement initiatives rather than promoting independent system efforts to engage parents. The purposes for any independent parent engagement efforts by the school system should be realistic and defensible;
- Work toward school system/Ministry of Education relationships which feature high level of reciprocity in the interests of achieving both shared and system-specific goals in the context of local system circumstances.
- Work on establishing relationships with teacher federations that will enable school and system leaders and federations to build mutual trust and engender support for the board's vision for student learning

Personal Leadership Resources

In addition to the practices found to be effective for most schools, systems and leaders in most contexts, the OLF includes a small but critical number of personal resources which leaders draw on in order to enact effective leadership practices. Considered together, these resources substantially overlap some of the leadership “traits” which preoccupied early leadership research and which lately have proven to be powerful explanations for leaders’ success.

Leadership traits have been defined broadly as relatively stable and coherent integrations of personal characteristics that foster a consistent pattern of leadership performance across a variety of group and organizational situations”.

While many traits or personal characteristics have been associated with leaders and leadership, the OLF includes only those for which there is compelling empirical evidence indicating they are instrumental to leadership success. Referred to in the OLF as “personal resources”, they are of three types— cognitive, social and psychological¹¹⁴.

6. Cognitive Resources

Considerable evidence collected over many decades suggests that leaders’ success or effectiveness is partly explained by intelligence and experience. This would only be surprising if it was not the case, although some early evidence indicates that stressful and hectic environments (features of environments in which school leaders often find themselves) reduce the advantage of greater intelligence to near zero.

Intelligence and experience, however, are “surface” traits of leaders offering little guidance to those selecting and developing leaders or to leaders and aspiring leaders themselves. Below the surface of what is typically referred to as leader’s intelligence are problem-solving capacities and below the surface of “experience” is the “domain-specific” knowledge useful for such problem solving. Intelligence is typically considered to be unchangeable and experience typically considered hard to replicate through training. In contrast, however, there is ample evidence that “expert” problem- solving capacities and the domain-specific knowledge on which they depend can be significantly improved through planned opportunities. So the two categories of cognitive resources included in the OLF are problem-solving expertise and knowledge about conditions which have direct effects on student learning and which can be influenced by schools.

6.1 Problem-solving Expertise

The term “problem”, as it is used in this section, is intended to be free of the negative connotations sometimes attached to it. A problem exists when (a) there is a gap between some current state of affairs and a preferred future state of affairs and (b) the means required to reduce the gap requires thought. The literature on expert problem solving processes includes some

¹¹⁴ These three types of personal resources approximate the dimensions used to frame the University of Maine’s leadership development program; these dimensions are labelled the “interpersonal”, the “cognitive”, and the “intrapersonal” (see Ackerman et al, 2011).

variation in how the component processes or skills required for gap reduction are depicted. But these different perspectives have much in common and the OLF adopts a perspective emerging from the only two sustained programs of research conducted about expert problem solving on the part of school and district leaders, in particular¹¹⁵. This line of research is primarily concerned with how leaders solve “unstructured” problems: these are the non-routine problems requiring significantly more than the application of existing know-how, or what is sometimes referred to as “adaptive leadership”.

Expertise on the part of school leaders, according to the best available evidence, is exercised through six component processes¹¹⁶. This section describes each of the component processes and summarizes the results of research about how each is carried out by school leaders who have relatively high levels of expertise.

Problem Interpretation is the leader’s understanding of the specific nature of the problem, often when multiple potential problems could be identified. School leaders’ problems do not come with labels on them; especially unstructured problems first arise as puzzle if not a mess. So many interpretations are possible, some with more productive possibilities than others. Highly expert school leaders almost always prioritize the problems they chose to work on according their estimates of the consequences for the learning of their students (usually large proportions of their students). These leaders consider difficult problems to be manageable (rather than stressful or frightening) if one thinks carefully about them and they rely on the collection of relevant information, rather than assumptions, to help them clarify the problem. Typically, expert school leaders are willing to spend whatever time it takes to arrive at a clear and comprehensive interpretation of the problem before going further. These leaders often involve others with a stake in the problem in helping to arriving at a productive and defensible interpretation.

Goals are the relatively immediate purposes that the leader is attempting to achieve in response to the interpretation of the problem eventually settled on. For expert school leaders, these goals usually have implications for student learning and program quality. These goals also typically include keeping parents well-informed and place greater weight on the knowledge that will be required to solve the problem than the emotions that might arise during the course of problem solving.

Principles and Values are the relatively long-term purposes, operating principles, fundamental laws, doctrines, assumptions guiding the leader’s thinking. Expert school leaders, as compared with more typical school leaders, rely more on a consistent set of values they are able to articulate quite clearly. They use these values as substitutes for knowledge in responding to those unstructured problems about which they might have little relevant knowledge.

Constraints are significant barriers, obstacles or factors severely narrowing the range of possible solutions the leader believes to be available. Expert school leaders usually identify relatively few

¹¹⁵ For a recent study using the Arts to foster leaders’ problem solving see Katz-Buonincontro & Phillips (2011)

¹¹⁶ These processes overlap substantially with a model of expert problem solving largely developed in non-school settings by Mumford et al (2007). Processes included in their formulation include, for example, identifying the causes of the problem, determining the resources available to solve the problem, diagnosing the restrictions on one’s choice of actions, and clarifying contingencies.

constraints to their problem solving, are quick to find ways of dealing with those constraints and almost never consider a constraint to be an insurmountable obstacle to moving forward.

Solution processes include the actions taken by leaders and others involved to solve the problem. Experts plan carefully and in some detail as they go about arriving at their solutions and preparing to implement them. They consult extensively with those who might be involved in the solution. Because of the significant resources that experts devote to problem interpretation, finding suitable solutions is often much less complicated for them than it is for those with unclear understandings of the problem they are attempting to solve.

Mood refers to the leader's emotional response to the problem and what is required to solve it. Experts remain calm and confident in the face of unstructured problems and they exude that calmness and confidence to their problem-solving partners. This mood contributes to their ability to think flexibly about problem solving.

6.2 Knowledge about School and Classroom Conditions with Direct Effects on Student Learning

Because school leaders' influence on student learning is largely indirect (a well-documented assumption of the OLF), knowledge about those school and classroom conditions with significant effects on students ("learning conditions") that can be influenced by school leaders is an extremely important aspect of what leaders need to know. Indeed, "leadership for learning" can be described relatively simply, but accurately, as a process of (a) diagnosing the status of potentially powerful learning conditions in the school and classroom, (b) selecting those learning conditions most likely to be constraining student learning in one's school, and (c) improving the status of those learning conditions. Several syntheses of recent research about school and classroom conditions mediating school leaders' influence on student learning identify four categories of such conditions – technical or rational, emotional, organizational and family conditions¹¹⁷.

Technical or rational conditions. Exercising a positive influence on this category of conditions calls on school leaders' knowledge about the "technical core" of schooling; these are both school and classroom conditions. In the classroom, for example, a recent synthesis of evidence implies that school leaders carefully consider the value of focusing their efforts on improving the extent to which teachers are providing students with immediate and informative feedback, teachers' use of reciprocal teaching strategies, teacher-student relations, the management of classrooms, and the general quality of teaching in the school. Many school-level variables have reported effects on student learning as large as all but a few classroom-level variables. Both Academic Press¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ See Leithwood et al (2010) for an empirical test of the effects on student achievement of leadership mediated by these four categories of learning conditions.

¹¹⁸ The concept that administrators and teachers should set high but achievable school goals and classroom academic standards

or Emphasis and Disciplinary Climate¹¹⁹ stand out among these especially consequential variables, for example.

Emotional conditions. Rational and emotional conditions are interconnected. Considerable evidence indicates, for example, that emotions direct cognition: they structure perception, direct attention, give preferential access to certain memories, and bias judgment in ways that help individuals respond productively to their environments. A recent review of evidence about teacher emotions and their consequences for classroom practice and student learning unambiguously recommends leaders' attention to this category of conditions as a means of improving student learning. Among the most influential conditions within this category are individual and collective teacher efficacy, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, morale, stress/burnout, engagement in the school or profession, and teacher trust in colleagues, parents, and students.

Organizational conditions. Structures, culture, policies, and standard operation procedures are among the conditions in this category. Collectively, they constitute teachers' working conditions which, in turn, have a powerful influence on teachers' emotions. These variables constitute both the school's infrastructure and a large proportion of its collective memory. At a minimum, a school's infrastructure should not prevent staff and students from making best use of their capacities. At best, school infrastructures should magnify those capacities and make it much easier to engage in productive rather than unproductive practices. A recent synthesis of evidence identified more than a dozen conditions in this category. Some can be found in the classroom (e.g., class size, ability groupings) while some are school-wide (e.g., school size, multi grade/age classes, retention policies).

Family conditions. It is often claimed that improving student learning is all about improving "instruction". While improving instruction in classrooms is both important and necessary work in many schools, this claim by itself ignores the potential impact of both the Emotional and Organizational categories of conditions. Even more critically, this claim seems to dismiss factors conditions created by students' families which typically account for as much as 50% of the variation in student achievement across schools. Since best estimates suggest that everything schools do within their walls accounts for about 20% of the variation in students' achievement across schools, influencing family conditions is a "high leverage" option for school leaders. By now, there is considerable evidence about the conditions created by families that can be influenced by schools and their leaders. A recent synthesis of evidence, for example, points to seven family-related conditions with widely varying effects on student learning. At least four of these conditions are open to influence from the school including home environment, parent involvement in school (positive and moderately strong effects), time spent watching television (weak negative effects), and visits to the home by school personnel (weak positive effects). Parent expectations, this and other recent evidence suggests, have among the strongest effects on student learning.

¹¹⁹ the idea that the focus of discipline should be the school rather than the individual student. The disciplinary climate covers, for example, school culture, teacher classroom management, prevention and intervention at the school level, and differences in social/cultural values between students and schools

7. Social Resources

The importance attached to leaders' social resources has a long history. For example, early efforts to theorize leadership carried out at Ohio and Michigan State universities in the 1950s and '60s situated relationship building among the two or three most important dimensions of effective leadership. According to these theories, effective leaders demonstrated "consideration" for their colleagues, for example, by acting in a friendly and supportive manner, showing concern for and looking out for their welfare.

More recent evidence continues to link leader effectiveness to perceptions of leader empathy on the part of colleagues, building on Goleman's claim that empathy "represents the foundation skill for all social competencies important for work"¹²⁰. These relationship-oriented behaviors also included demonstrations of trust and confidence, keeping colleagues informed, and showing appreciation for their ideas and recognition of their accomplishments.

More recent theories of transformational leadership continue this focus by including "individualized consideration" among their categories of leadership practices, as does the claim made by leader-member exchange theory (LMX)¹²¹ that leadership effectiveness depends on building differentiated relationships with each of one's colleagues, relationships that reflect their individual needs, desires and capacities.

So the ability to develop and sustain good working relationships has long been acknowledged as fundamental for leaders in almost all organizational contexts. However, the importance of this ability grows with the interpersonal intensity typically experienced within an organization and the demands such intensity places on its leadership. Schools typically experience a level of interpersonal intensity virtually unmatched in any other type of organization. Such intensity is experienced by both teachers and administrators. For teachers, interpersonal intensity is largely a function of working with many students at one time, and responding to their individual needs, capacities and interests as a means of helping them all achieve the common set of purposes found in the school's curriculum. School administrators also interact with students, often under emotionally-charged circumstances. But all school "stakeholders", not only students, have the right and frequently the desire to interact with especially the school principal. Many exercise that right. These stakeholders include everyone inside the school building, as well as parents, members of local businesses and community groups, sometimes trustees, certainly anyone from the central office of the school system, and occasionally Ministry of Education officials.

Furthermore, the positional authority or power of school leaders, in relation to all these stakeholders, is quite circumscribed. Depending on the issue, parents, central office staff, teacher unions and trustees can often command a level of authority or power equal to or greater than the principal's. Principals have an enormous range of responsibilities but very constrained positional power. Being an effective leader under circumstances such as these entails, for example, discerning the expectations of others, appreciating their points of view, finding common ground among competing interests and creating a sense of shared purpose among all or most of the

¹²⁰ Sadri, Weber & Gentry (2011, page 819).

¹²¹ Although not much discussed in the educational literature, this leadership theory is widely evident in mainstream leadership literature: for example, see Graen & Uhl-Bien (1996)

school's stakeholders. This interpersonal work of school leaders is ubiquitous, as well as emotionally laborious. And doing it well requires substantially more of leaders than what early leadership theories described as "showing consideration" or engaging in "relationship building".

The capacity to do this kind of work depends on leaders' "social intelligence", "social appraisal skills" or "emotional intelligence", concepts treated as largely similar in the OLF and referred to subsequently as Social Resources. These resources account for a large proportion of a leader's interpersonal competence and an impressive amount of evidence now demonstrates the contribution of these relational resources to a wide range of desirable individual and organizational outcomes¹²².

Social resources encompass the leader's ability to understand the feelings, thoughts and behaviors of persons, including oneself, in interpersonal situations and to act appropriately on that understanding. The three sets of social resources included in the OLF are about perceiving emotions, managing emotions, and acting productively in response to their own and others' emotions. Enacting these social resources well helps build a positive emotional climate in the school, an important mediator of leaders' impacts on the performance of their organizations¹²³.

7.1 Perceiving Emotions

This set of social resources includes the ability to detect, from a wide array of clues, one's own emotions (self-awareness) and the emotions of others. People with this relational resource are:

- Able to recognize their own emotional responses and how those emotional responses shape their focus of attention and influence their actions;
- Able to discern the emotions being experienced by others from, for example, their tone of voice, facial expressions, body language and other verbal and non-verbal information.

7.2 Managing Emotions

This set of social resources includes managing one's own and others' emotions, including the interaction of emotions on the part of different people in pairs and groups. People with this relational resource:

- Are able to understand the reasons for their own "intuitive" emotional responses and are able to reflect on the potential consequences of those responses;
- Are able to persuade others to be more reflective about their own "intuitive" emotional responses and to reflect on the potential consequences of those responses.

7.3 Acting in Emotionally Appropriate Ways

This set of social resources entails the ability to respond to the emotions of others in ways that support the purposes for the interaction by:

¹²² For an especially meaningful description of how one group of female secondary principals managed their own emotions and the emotional climate of their schools see Smith (2011).

¹²³ For example, see Menges, Walter, Vogel and Bruch (2011).

- Being able to exercise a high level of cognitive control over which emotions are allowed to guide their actions;
- Being able to assist others to act on emotions most likely to best serve their interests.

8. Psychological Resources

There are two primary reasons for including psychological resources in the OLF. One reason has to do with the complexity of school leaders' jobs. Complex jobs feature higher than average amounts of:

- ambiguity (e.g., expectations from parents are sometimes different than expectations of the school system or the Ministry of Education);
- risk (e.g., school leaders are the focal point for much public accountability); and
- uncertainty about achieving desired outcomes (e.g., “closing the achievement gap” is a goal for which many schools and their leaders are held accountable even though codified knowledge about how to accomplish this goal is quite limited).

As the challenges facing leaders become increasingly complex, there is an increasing drain on their psychological resources. Well-developed psychological resources allow leaders to cope productively in the face of high levels of complexity without giving up, experiencing excessive strain or becoming burnt out.

A second reason for including psychological resources, particularly the three resources identified here is their contribution to leader initiative, creativity and responsible risk-taking behavior¹²⁴. Leaders are unlikely to deviate from well-established practices in order to improve their schools unless they believe they have a very good chance of being successful. The three psychological resources included in the OLF foster such a belief.

The three psychological resources included in the OLF are is, optimism, self-efficacy and resilience. While evidence suggests that each of these resources make significant contributions to leadership initiatives, responsible risk-taking and eventual success, a recent line of theory and research argues that when the three resources act in synergy, that is, when one person possesses all three resources, they make an especially large contribution to leadership success.

8.1 Optimism

Generic definitions of both optimism and hope are included in the meaning ascribed to optimism here, even though they are sometimes considered distinct dispositions. Optimism is the habitual expectation of success in one's efforts to address challenges and confront change now and in the future. Optimistic leaders habitually expect good things to result from their initiatives while pessimistic leaders habitually assume that their efforts will be thwarted, as often as not. When the expectations of optimistic leaders are not met, they pursue alternative paths to accomplish their goals. Leaders' optimistic expectations, however, do not necessarily extend to their organizations as a whole. Rather, optimistic leaders expect their efforts to be successful in relation to those things over which they have direct influence or control but not necessarily to be

¹²⁴ Considerable evidence suggests that initiative is a very important personality characteristic of effective leaders (e.g., Murphy & Johnson, 2011)

powerful enough to overcome negative forces in their organizations over which they have little or no influence or control; they are realistic as well as optimistic.

Optimism is associated with leadership success because, as one group of researchers explain:

Optimists tend to make internal, stable, and global attributions for successes and external, unstable, and specific attributions for failures. Thus, should a negative outcome occur during the process of change, optimists would tend to remain motivated toward success because they conclude the failure was not due to something inherent in them (external) but was instead something unique in that situation (specific) and a second attempt will likely not result in failure again (unstable)...[furthermore]...optimistic people expect positive outcomes for themselves regardless of personal ability.

Optimistic leaders, as a consequence, are likely to take initiative and responsible risks with positive expectations regardless of past problems or setbacks.

8.2 Self-efficacy

Both optimism and efficacy (or confidence) contributes to the likelihood of a leader possessing such dispositions continuing to strive for success even in the face of initial failure. Unlike optimism, however, efficacy's contribution is ability based. Sense of efficacy is a belief about one's own ability to perform a task or achieve a goal. It is a belief about ability, not actual ability. That is, efficacious leaders believe they have the ability to solve whatever challenges, hurdles or problems that might come their way in their efforts to help their organizations succeed. Self-efficacy beliefs contribute to leaders' success through their directive effects on leaders' choices of activities and settings and can affect coping efforts once those activities are begun. Efficacy beliefs determine how much risk people will take, how much effort they will expend and how long they will persist in the face of failure or difficulty. The stronger the self-efficacy the longer the persistence.

Leadership self-efficacy or confidence, it has been claimed, is likely the key cognitive variable regulating leader functioning in a dynamic environment and has a very strong relationship with a leaders' performance. This belief in one's ability encourages leaders to generate alternative means for achieving their goals, to take action toward accomplishing their goals and to persist, in the face of challenges, toward achieving those goals.

8.3 Resilience

Resilience, the "ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change", is significantly assisted by high levels of efficacy but goes beyond the belief in one's capacity to achieve in the long run. At the core of resilience is the ability to "bounce back" from failure and even move beyond one's initial goals while doing so. Resilient leaders or potential leaders have the ability to thrive in the challenging circumstances commonly encountered by school leaders.

The combined effect of Optimism, Efficacy and Resilience, as Luthans and his colleagues explain, is characterized by:

(1) having confidence (self-efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks; (2) making a positive expectation (optimism) about succeeding now and in the future...[as well as]... (3) persevering toward goals and, when necessary, redirecting paths to goals ... in order to succeed; and (4) when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resilience) to attain success.

9. Using Personal Resource for Leadership Recruitment and Selection

The three sets of personal resources included in the OLF - cognitive, social and psychological - begin to identify some of the underlying explanations for differences in what leaders do and account for variation among leaders in how well they are able to enact OLF's effective leadership practices. However, the acquisition of some of resources, for most people, takes place over extended periods of time, typically much more time than is provided by even the most well-planned and sustained leadership development program. Of the three sets of Personal Leadership Resources, cognitive resources are the most responsive to direct and short-term intervention. While considerable effort has also been made to develop interventions for improving leaders' social resources, this is a more complex and less certain undertaking. And we know much less about how to successfully build the psychological resources included in the OLF. For these reasons, the possession of many of these resources ought to be among the most important criteria used for the initial recruitment and selection of school leaders.

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