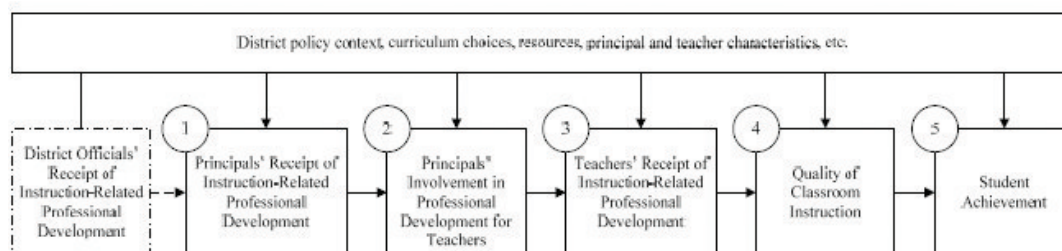


Instructional Leadership for Quality Learning

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Abstract: According to this study, through leadership training, school principals learn about high-quality instruction and about actions that they can take to motivate and support their teachers. Principals then organize professional learning for their teachers and otherwise help teachers improve their classroom practices. With improved instruction, the theory maintains, student achievement will also improve. The study objective of learning for district and school administrators is guided by a theory of action that is depicted in Figure 1. As the figure suggests, principals play a key role in the instructional improvement process by setting in motion a sequence of school-level behavior changes that make for improved teaching and learning. We want to definitive the method that can be used to improve learning and we named this program - Principles of Learning - this Principles are about concrete actions that professor can take to motivate and support their teachers. Principals are expected to organize professional learning for their teachers as well as to monitor teachers' classroom practices and help them incorporate new behaviors that are in accordance with the Principles of Learning into their instructional repertory. With improved instruction, the theory holds, student achievement will improve.

Keywords: instructional leadership, instructional supervision, pedagogical leadership, school improvement, transformational leadership



Source: Learning Research and Development Center

The association between school leadership and student achievement is well established in the research literature. Reviews of quantitative studies suggest that leadership is second only to classroom instruction among the school-related factors that contribute to student learning.¹ Much is known, too, about *how* effective principals lead: by setting goals, by improving the school setting, and by helping teachers develop instructional skills.² Finally, researchers have linked high-quality instruction to student achievement.³

What is less well understood is whether professional development offered to school leaders can improve low-performing schools – or the process by which such transformation can occur. A study of the chain of actions linking professional development for

principals to better teaching and increased student learning is particularly timely, given the accountability context in which school leaders now operate. Principals are under pressure to produce results, especially increased test scores and reduced achievement disparities associated with income and race. This pressure to improve achievement places a premium on defining effective leadership and producing credible findings about the connections between leaders' actions, desired instructional practice, and student achievement.

This study wants to promulgate a set of principles about the ideas and practices that lead to academic achievement for all students. These Principles are called "Principles of Learning,".

The IFL Principles of Learning

Organizing for Effort

Sustained and directed effort, rather than aptitude, determines what and how much students learn. Everything should be organized to evoke and support this effort: Schools should set high minimum standards, teach all students a rigorous curriculum, and give students as much time and instruction as they need to meet expectations.

Fair and Credible Evaluations

To evoke sustained effort, schools should use assessments that students find fair — that are aligned with what is taught and with standards and that are graded against absolute standards rather than on a curve. Such assessments also provide parents, colleges, and employers with credible evaluations of what students know and can do.

Recognition of Accomplishment

Recognition of authentic accomplishment motivates students. Recognition can celebrate work that meets standards or that reaches intermediate benchmarks en route to the standards. Progress points should be articulated so that each student can meet real accomplishment criteria often enough to be recognized frequently.

Socializing Intelligence

Intelligence is a set of problem-solving and reasoning capabilities, along with the habits of mind that lead one to use these capabilities regularly; it also encompasses beliefs about one's right, obligation, and capacity to make sense of the world

over time. Educators should “teach” intelligence by holding students re-sponsible for using these thinking skills.

Self-Management of Learning

Students need to develop and use an array of metacognitive (self-monitoring) and self-management strategies: noticing when they don’t understand something and taking steps to remedy this, formulating questions that lead to deeper understandings, and judging progress toward a goal. Schools should model and encourage use of these strategies.

Learning as Apprenticeship

Learning environments should be organized so that teachers model complex thinking and analysis and so that students receive mentoring and coaching as they undertake extended projects.

***Accountable Talk**

Classroom talk that promotes learning must put forth knowledge that is accurate and relevant to the issue under discussion, use appropriate evidence, respond to and further develop what others in the group have said, and follow norms of good reasoning. Teachers should create the norms and skills of Accountable Talk in their classrooms.

***Academic Rigor in a Thinking Curriculum**

Problem-solving and thinking should be taught in the context of a solid foundation of knowledge of major concepts that students are expected to know deeply. Teaching should engage students in active reasoning about these concepts and promote the active use of knowledge in every subject and at every grade level.

***Clear Expectations**

Schools should define explicitly what students are expected to learn. Descriptive criteria and models of work that meets standards should be publicly displayed and used to help students analyze and evaluate their own work.

SOURCE: Adapted from descriptions of the Principles of Learning available on the IFL Web site (University of Pittsburgh, Learning Research and Development Center, Institute for Learning, 2007).

The first Principle of Learning shown in the box above – Organizing for Effort – is arguably the most fundamental. This is the belief that students’ sustained and directed effort is more important to their academic success than mere aptitude — or, as one district official put it, “Intelligent is something you get, not something you are.”

A corollary of this belief is that schools and classrooms must be organized to guide

and support student effort. The remaining Principles of Learning detail the specific ways that such guidance and support can occur. These include such practices as instituting a standards-based curriculum and assessing students’ achievement against those standards, assigning rigorous tasks, recognizing students’ accomplishments, encouraging teachers to model thinking about complex issues, and encouraging students to become

cognizant of what they do and don't know so that they can take steps to fill the gaps.

The three asterisked Principles of Learning in Box 1.1 — Accountable Talk, Academic Rigor in a Thinking Curriculum (Academic Rigor, for short), and Clear Expectations — are central to the Instructional Leadership Study. These principles represent key observable characteristics of high-quality instruction

Accountable Talk

In reading and math lessons where there is strong evidence of Accountable Talk during classroom discussions, both the teacher and the students actively listen to and build on students' contributions, and students are expected to consistently back up what they say with appropriate evidence or reasoning. The idea behind this Principle of Learning is that when students are pressed to defend their positions with evidence, and to listen and respond critically to their teacher and fellow students, they are forced to think at a higher level, and this increases achievement. This type of class discussion stands in sharp contrast to lessons in which students give their answers or opinions to the teacher and the teacher's only response is to inform them whether they are wrong or right.

Academic Rigor

Reading classes where there is strong evidence of Academic Rigor are those in which students are engaged with the texts they read in rich and meaningful ways. The theory is that students who are expected to analyze texts and not just answer factual questions about them will have a deeper understanding of these texts and will thereby become

insightful, critical readers. The idea behind Rigor of the Task in Math is very similar to the idea behind Academic Rigor in Reading. Students in academically rigorous math classes are expected to tackle complex mathematical problems and to be able to explain their thought processes to their teachers and peers rather than to memorize algorithms without thinking about how they work. Students who have the opportunity to think critically about mathematics will have a better understanding of mathematics, which should be reflected in their achievement.

Clear Expectations

In reading and math lessons where there is strong evidence of Clear Expectations, students receive clear and detailed instructions from their teachers about what they must do and must include in their work in order for it to be considered high-quality. The idea behind this rubric is that students will have a better understanding of what they are expected to learn from the task when they know that they are expected to explain their thinking in addition to providing an answer and when they are given the tools to help them in their thinking.

It appears that at schools where teachers reported receiving more instruction-related professional development, instructional quality in reading classrooms was higher. In addition, at schools where teachers received more professional development on Accountable Talk and Clear Expectations, teachers were more likely to teach their reading classes in ways that exemplified these principles. Finally, at schools where instructional quality was higher (that is, where teachers implemented the Principles of Learning at higher

levels), larger proportions of students met state standards both in reading and in math. In particular, higher student achievement is associated with higher levels of Accountable Talk and Academic Rigor in reading lessons and with higher levels of Accountable Talk in math lessons.

The findings of this report address both practice and theory. With respect to practice, they point to key operational lessons for district administrators and principals and for those who deliver professional development. First, district administrators need to “inspect what they expect” — that is, to follow up to ensure that principals pass on what they have learned to the teachers in their schools. The fact that there is no *direct* connection between the frequency with which principals reported receiving professional development and the frequency with which teachers reported such receipt — that the connection

was mediated by the principal’s subsequent actions in making professional development available to teachers — suggests that giving principals more professional development will not, in and of itself, ensure that their teachers learn more, teach better, and have higher-achieving students. Moreover, some principals may tell technical assistance providers how much they appreciate the professional development that they have received — how well-delivered it was, how useful it appears to be, and so on. But the study does not indicate that generally valuing the instruction-related professional development that they received led principals to play a more active role in the professional development of their teachers. Administrators need to follow up with seemingly enthusiastic principals just as assiduously as they would with any others to ensure that enthusiasm gets translated into action.

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