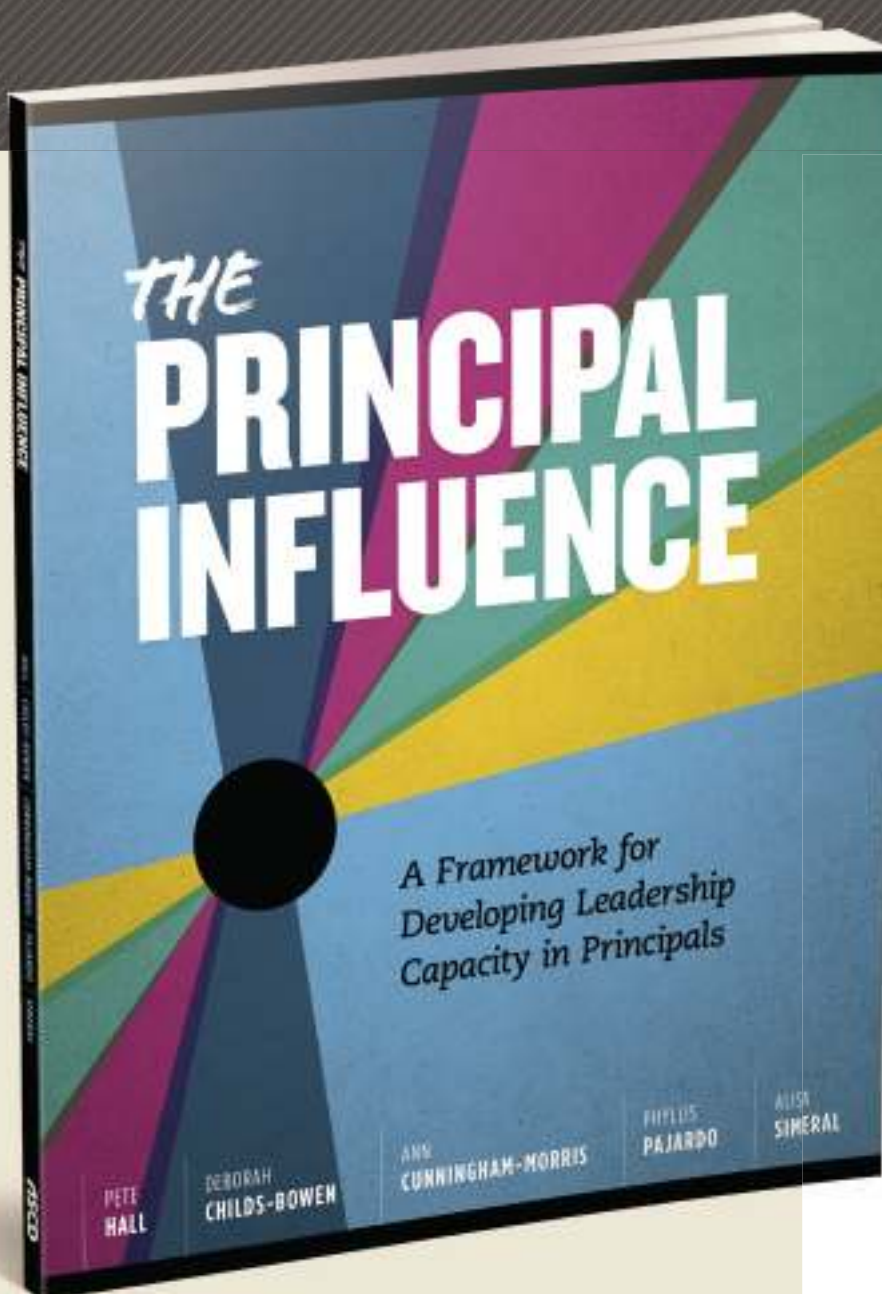


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BY

Pete Hall,
Deborah Childs-Bowen,
Ann Cunningham-Morris,
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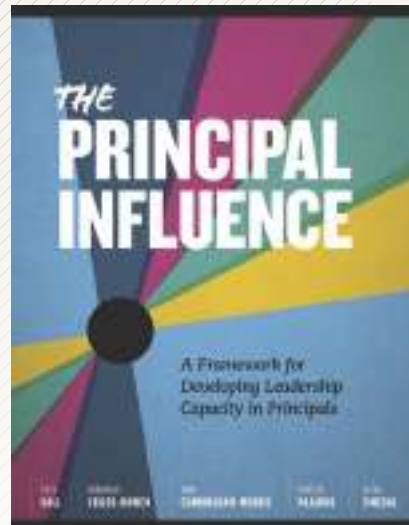
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The Principal Influence: A Framework for Developing Leadership Capacity in Principals

by Pete Hall, Deborah Childs-Bowen, Ann Cunningham-Morris, Phyllis Pajardo, & Alisa Simeral



PRINCIPALS NAVIGATE THE DYNAMIC COMPLEXITIES AND SUBTLETIES OF THEIR SCHOOLS EVERY DAY.

They promote, facilitate, and lead efforts to achieve both tangible and intangible results throughout the school community. They fulfill a role that includes counseling, budgeting, inspiring, teaching, learning, disciplining, evaluating, celebrating, consoling, and a million other critical functions.

As the principalship has evolved and grown, so have the expectations of it. With that in mind, ASCD developed the Principal Leadership Development Framework (PLDF). The PLDF establishes a clear and concise definition of building leadership and includes clear targets that support the ongoing growth and development of leaders.

Using the Framework, principals will learn to capitalize on their instructional leadership roles:

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

The PLDF also offers 17 criteria of effective practice that allow leaders to focus on behaviors that have the greatest direct effect on the culture and status of learning and teaching. Coupled with the PLDF are tools for self-reflection that help principals identify and strengthen their reflective habits.

Whether you want to develop your own capacities or support the development of a group of principals, assistant principals, or aspiring principals, *The Principal Influence* can help channel your efforts in ways that promote successful teaching and student learning.

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PETE HALL has dedicated his career to supporting the improvement of our education systems. **DEBORAH CHILDS-BOWEN** is an internationally recognized transformational educator. **ANN CUNNINGHAM-MORRIS** has served educators for over 35 years. **PHYLLIS PAJARDO** is presently the assistant superintendent in Fairfax City, VA, schools. **ALISA SIMERAL** has guided school-based reform efforts as a teacher, instructional coach, and professional developer.

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THE PRINCIPAL INFLUENCE

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PART I

Why Leadership?

Leadership. Entering that simple keyword into any Internet search engine will return millions of hits in a fraction of a second. Further investigation of these sources will confirm what you already knew: leadership is a complex, subtle, delicate, and dynamic concept. In our schools, districts, and education systems, we must have leaders—effective leaders—to achieve the results that our society requires. As Stronge, Richard, and Catano state, “One essential ingredient for success in education and any business, for that matter, is effective leadership” (2008, p. xii).

Any discussion of leadership in education includes a nod to the building leader: the school principal. In a role that encapsulates the varied and nuanced work of middle management—and extends beyond plant maintenance and compliance to include counseling, budgeting, inspiring, teaching, learning, disciplining, evaluating, buffering, celebrating, consoling, and a million other tasks—the principal is indeed the CLO (Chief Learning Officer). Ultimately, student performance expectations rest squarely on the shoulders of the principal.

Quite simply, the school principal is arguably the most influential position in education today. This statement does not diminish the impact of district superintendents, state department officials, legislators, the U.S. secretary of education, and the legions of professional teachers and educators improving children’s lives on a daily basis; rather, it acknowledges the unique positional influence held by the building administrator. Who else but the principal builds a more substantial bridge between policy and practice?

Kenneth Leithwood and his colleagues found that “it turns out that leadership not only matters; it is second only to teaching among school-related factors in its impact on student learning” (2004, p. 3). Principals, in particular, must create both a school culture and infrastructure that support effective teaching and learning practices by transforming the structures, processes, and performance throughout the school environment (Childs-Bowen, Moller, & Scrivner, 2000).

In John Hattie’s meta-analysis of the factors that influence student achievement (2009), 27 of the top 30 (ranked by effect size) are school-, teacher-, and curriculum-based, all of which are directly influenced by the building principal. Furthermore, über-researcher Bob Marzano notes that leadership could well be considered “the single most important aspect of effective school reform” (2003, p. 172). In a

summation we welcome fondly, noted school leadership expert Douglas Reeves states quite plainly that “leadership matters” (2009, p. 107).

A Call for Sustainability

The demands on the principal in the Era of Accountability are as extensive and formidable as ever. It is well documented that the curious blend of increased public demand for results and the across-the-board disinvestment in education have resulted in a principalship that is defined by stress, moving targets, heightened responsibility, and a remarkable turnover rate. Unfortunately, it’s no surprise that a recent report indicates that over one-fifth of new principals leave the job within two years (Burkhauser, Gates, Hamilton, & Ikemoto, 2012).

Alarmingly, the WestEd Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning reports that principals are dealing with competing pressures that may ultimately make the job untenable (Bland et al., 2011). It would appear that we’re tugging at the rope from both ends: effective principal leadership is critical to school success, yet the job itself is virtually impossible to accomplish. Frequent turnover, daunting challenges, overwhelming responsibilities, and stressed-out principals just aren’t good for kids, teachers, districts, or the future of our society. The time is now to attend to the ongoing growth, support, and development of our school principals.

Building Leadership Capacity

“If we are to succeed as an educational enterprise in a highly competitive world, then we must embrace leadership development—not in a cursory fashion, but rather in an ongoing, comprehensive, sustained manner” (Stronge et al., 2008, p. xii). And if the principal is such an important driver in the educational engine, then it would behoove us as educators to embrace a comprehensive and detailed description of effective leadership approaches. To that end, because of its rich history of taking effective leadership research and making it practical for use in schools and districts, ASCD composed the first iteration of its Leadership Development Framework in 2008.

Based on existing and emerging research on effective school leadership and aligned with the 2008 Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards (with a definitive bent toward *instructional* leadership), the original ASCD Leadership Development Framework provided guidelines for what successful principals do. Created, vetted, and refined over an 18-month period by internal ASCD leaders and an external team of school and district leaders, state department of education leaders, and ASCD Faculty members with leadership development expertise, this document provided a suitable frame for expressing the core characteristics of effective instructional leadership.

As the role of the principal has evolved over the years, and as the ISLLC standards and other leadership standards were revisited and revised, ASCD was inspired to update its work, now titling it the *Principal Leadership Development Framework*, to better address a handful of key questions.

What does effective school-based instructional leadership look like?

ASCD's Principal Leadership Development Framework (or PLDF) establishes a clear and concise picture of effective building leadership, expressing the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and actions necessary for success as a principal. In essence, it provides a clear target to support the ongoing growth and development of our leaders.

In what ways is the Framework unique? Over the past seven decades, ASCD has built a brand and reputation on leading the discussion of research-based best practices in education by investigating, researching, proposing, and clarifying the characteristics, behaviors, attitudes, and approaches of effective school leaders. A scan of the PLDF will reveal a significant tilt toward instructional leadership—as opposed to the duties of school management.

How does the Framework support principals' growth? There are two distinct pathways to access and utilize this tool: at the school level and at the district level.

- With a clear target in view, principals, assistant principals, and aspiring principals can address their own professional development needs. This is Pathway One, in which individual leaders create plans and execute them to bolster the practices, structures, and processes essential for sustained professional growth.
- In addition, the content and descriptions in the Framework can be integrated into the design of a sustainable district leadership development and coaching program for principals, assistant principals, and aspiring principals. Pathway Two, then, addresses the support provided to building leaders by their supervisors or other district-level leadership support networks.

Both of these pathways are explained in greater detail in Chapter 1.

What is the philosophy that drives the Framework? The ASCD PLDF is grounded in the belief that the growth of individual leaders and leadership teams leads to schoolwide and systemic growth that positively influences student learning. Just as we must build teachers' capacity to support ongoing growth and effectiveness in the classroom, so must we build leaders' capacity through continuous learning and reflective practice. This alignment provides a solid stanchion to which all of our approaches are inextricably connected.

How does reflective practice fit in the Framework? Having a list of effective leadership behaviors provides a clear target—a necessary, yet not sufficient, condition. Accurate, thorough, and continuous reflection will tip the balance. Effective leaders must be aware of their contextual reality, act with intentionality, assess the effect of their actions, and adjust course as necessary. In Chapter 2, we blend the

PLDF with the Principal's Continuum of Self-Reflection and the Reflective Cycle (Hall & Simeral, 2008, 2015), a potent combination of tools that help practitioners identify and strengthen their reflective habits. You'll notice the explicit inclusion of reflective practices woven throughout this text—indeed, self-reflection is the so-called red thread that connects our beliefs to our actions and will ultimately guide us to leadership success.

Leadership That Lasts

In any school environment, leadership is vital. Developing effective school leaders is a monumental responsibility, shared equally between the leaders themselves and their district counterparts.

From the demystification of effective leadership behaviors to the clarification of individual leadership strengths and collective systemic needs, school district officials and building administrators collaborating about continuous growth can have an immense effect on the ultimate results: increased student achievement. Using the ASCD PLDF, coupled with the Continuum of Self-Reflection and the Reflective Cycle, is an ideal strategy for acquiring that yield.

Complementary to any educator effectiveness model, principal evaluation model, or leadership rubric already in place in a district, this growth-oriented approach supports goal setting, planning, and strategic development of ongoing professional growth. Its reliance on building self-reflective abilities ensures an enduring, capacity-building impact on system, school, and individual leadership influences.

CHAPTER 1

The Principal Leadership Development Framework

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

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

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

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

Who Will Benefit from the Framework?

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

FIGURE 1.1

ASCD's Principal Leadership Development Framework**PRINCIPAL AS VISIONARY**

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

PRINCIPAL AS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADER

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

PRINCIPAL AS ENGAGER

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

PRINCIPAL AS LEARNER AND COLLABORATOR

1. Facilitates the delivery of job-embedded, ongoing, coordinated professional learning opportunities that lead to increased student achievement.
2. Develops internal leaders and nurtures an environment of distributed leadership, collective responsibility, and collaborative decision making.
3. Models reflective practice, confidence, humility, perseverance, and interest in continuous growth and lifelong learning.
4. Participates regularly in professional learning organizations, a community of practice, and a leadership network.

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

Two Pathways to Build Leadership Capacity

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

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

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

Pathway One: Individual Professional Growth

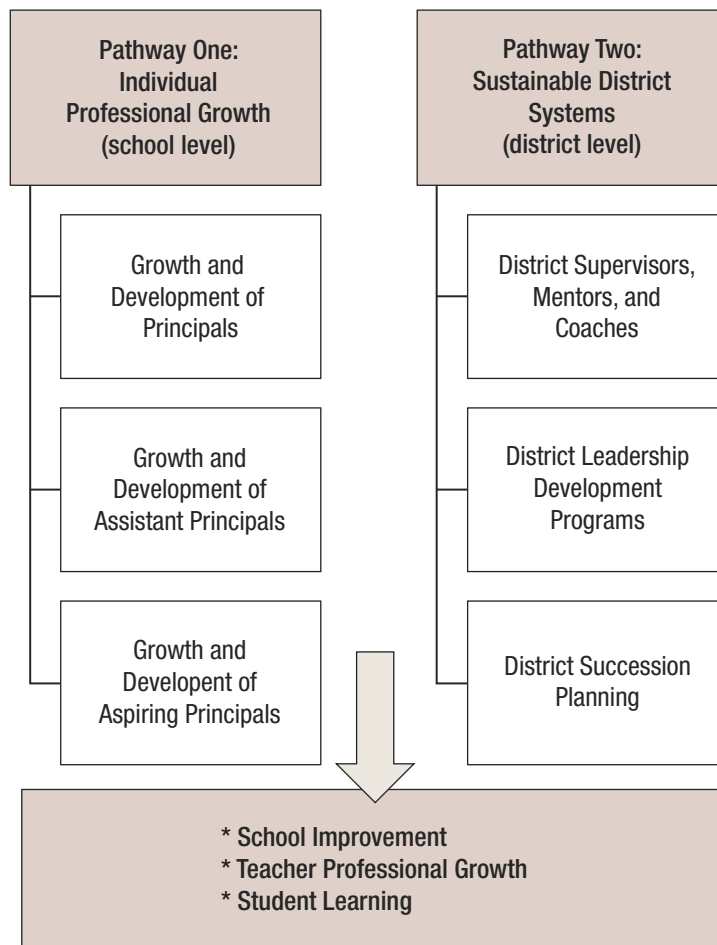
To create effective schools that have the strongest influence on student learning, development efforts must be embedded throughout all leadership roles, and professional learning experiences must be guided by a specific set of principles.

Growth and Development of Principals

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

FIGURE 1.2

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



expertise. Thankfully, as Doug Reeves emphatically stated, “Excellent leadership is an acquired skill” (2002, p. 4).

Growth and Development of Assistant Principals

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

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

Growth and Development of Aspiring Principals

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

Pathway Two: Sustainable District Systems

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

District Supervisors, Mentors, and Coaches

School district officials have long felt the challenges associated with leading, motivating, and guiding the ongoing professional growth of building principals. The daunting question we pose is this: How do we lead the leaders? Embracing a philosophy of continuous improvement and assuming a growth mindset (Dweck, 2006), those in district leadership positions can indeed affect the thinking, decision making, planning, and actions of their seated principals. When professional development includes resources such as job-embedded coaching and feedback, educators are able

to apply their new learning and skills at an increased rate of around 95 percent (Joyce & Showers, 1982). Within the PLDF are the tools for districts to tackle the ambitious and vital task of growing their leadership corps.

District Leadership Development Programs

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

District Succession Planning

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



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