

# *Research Synthesis of Virginia Principal Evaluation Competencies and Standards*

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# ***SECTION 1***

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Synthesis on Extant Research Related to Virginia Principal Evaluation Standards**

The school principal's role has evolved over the past two decades. In addition to the largely management responsibilities of the past, today's principals are expected to lead their schools with the ultimate goal of increasing student learning while helping staff to grow professionally. What was once a largely managerial role has evolved to reflect the necessity of both management and leadership roles. Though the responsibilities are large, effective principals can and do address, prioritize, balance, and carry out these responsibilities.

The Virginia Principal Evaluation System is comprised of a set of common standards that reflect the qualities of effective principals. The purpose of these standards is to specify performance expectations in each of the seven performance areas. The ultimate goal is to support principal growth and development. By monitoring, analyzing, and identifying areas of strength and areas for growth within these comprehensive standards, principals and their supervisors can be assured that principal performance is continually enhanced and refined. In other words, leadership development is an ongoing and valued aspect of the Virginia Principal Evaluation System.

Virginia Principal Performance Standards address the *what* and the *how* of each standard—*what* the standard is, and *how* it is evidenced. This report supplies the *why* by providing an empirical review of the relevant research related to each of the Virginia Uniform Performance Principal Standards.

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# ***SECTION 2***

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## **AN OVERVIEW OF THE EXTANT RESEARCH RELATED TO EACH PRINCIPAL PERFORMANCE STANDARD**

### **Performance Standard 1: Instructional Leadership**

*The principal fosters the success of all students by facilitating the development, communication, implementation, and evaluation of a shared vision of teaching and learning that leads to school improvement.*

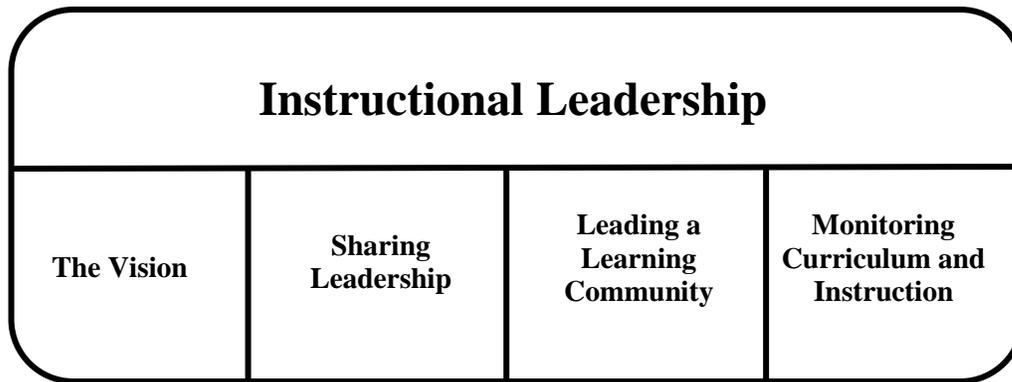
#### **What does instructional leadership mean?**

In general terms, instructional leadership is a focus on factors that promote and support teaching and learning.<sup>1</sup> More than ever, with the advent of stringent state and national learning standards, principals must concentrate on components that lead to student success and school improvement. Research indicates that instructional leaders do impact student achievement, though indirectly.<sup>2</sup> Thus, it behooves principals to prioritize their instructional role as one of critical importance.

#### **What does research say about instructional leadership as it relates to school principals?**

Effective instructional leaders focus their efforts on school improvement and student success. They do this in several ways. Creating a vision for the school community is a necessary first step. Sharing leadership so that responsibilities are distributed goes far in creating a cohesive team that has a stake in success as the outcome. Leading a learning community helps to ensure the principal demonstrates the importance of continual staff growth and development. Finally, effective principals monitor curriculum and instruction.

Figure 1. Instructional Leadership Responsibilities



**Creating a Vision.** Effective, forward-thinking principals understand that creating a vision is at the heart of what they do; a first step that becomes the impetus through which all future decisions, goals, and dreams are funneled.<sup>3</sup> They also understand that if a vision is to reach fruition it must be inspiring enough to be embraced by others within the organization: it must become a shared vision.<sup>4</sup>

Principals of high achieving schools are clear about the school’s vision and goals.<sup>5</sup> A shared vision helps guide all in the school community to the destination—student success and school improvement. From the vision, goals for learning are established. Buy-in to both the vision and the learning goals is important—the savvy principal understands this and seeks commitment from the school community.<sup>6</sup> An example may help to illustrate the importance of shared vision.

Providence-St. Mel is a high achieving K-12 school serving urban, African American students. Located on Chicago’s west side, 100 percent of its graduating students have been accepted to four-year colleges for the past 25 years. One of the findings noted by researchers is that principals “worked hard to create a common vision of the school, one that definitely plays out in every classroom.”<sup>7</sup> Teachers embrace the vision and the learning goals believing that these are instrumental to the success enjoyed by their students.

Various research studies on high-achieving schools find that principals play an important role in building and sustaining the school’s vision:

- High-achieving schools have principals who communicate to all that the school’s most important mission is learning.<sup>8</sup>
- High-achieving schools have principals who believe that established school goals are attainable.<sup>9</sup>
- High-achieving schools have principals who expect that both teachers and students can meet established goals.<sup>10</sup>

**Sharing Leadership.** Sharing leadership is not to be confused with delegating responsibilities or garnering extra help. Rather, it can be defined broadly “as teachers’ influence over and participation in schoolwide decisions.”<sup>11</sup> Effective principals understand the value of

collaborative effort in successfully realizing the common vision. They realize that in order to meet instructional goals, they need buy-in from the staff.<sup>12</sup> By sharing leadership, the principal acknowledges that everyone has important contributions to make. Further, providing opportunities for stakeholders to participate in decision making about issues affecting them and that they are knowledgeable about, is an affirmation of the integral role they play in goal accomplishment.<sup>13</sup> Capitalizing on the leadership and instructional strengths of other staff members is smart leadership.

Strong leadership is necessary for turnaround in struggling schools. Principals chart a direction and influence others to stay the course to meet organizational goals. Principals who help develop teacher leaders are strengthening their school's instructional program.

Research indicates that principals who tap the expertise of the school's teacher leaders are beneficiaries of the following:

- Teacher leaders positively affect change from the classroom when they inquire about school improvement and then participate in answering the question.<sup>14</sup>
- As teacher leaders work with principals toward school improvement, they provide valuable insights and ideas.<sup>15</sup>
- Teacher leaders willingly take on additional tasks and responsibilities that are not required of classroom teachers that benefit the school and other teachers within it.<sup>16</sup>
- Principals who develop and tap the expertise of teacher leaders and refocus their emphasis on learning throughout the school improvement effort are more successful than those who do not.<sup>17</sup>

**Leading a Learning Community.** Learning is a lifelong process. Effective principals take the lead in promoting professional growth and learning for both themselves and their staffs. Two primary functions around which schools are organized include: (1) teaching and learning, and (2) organizing for teaching and learning.<sup>18</sup> Communicating this focus to every stakeholder in the school community is a crucial principal responsibility.

Principals who prioritize student learning are successful.<sup>19</sup> Prioritizing student learning means paying attention to and communicating the importance of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. This is where principals focus their instructional attention. It also means being visible in and around the school.<sup>20</sup> When staff see principals out and about, interested in the daily goings-on, they see principals who are engaged and involved.

In order to promote the practices that lead to effective teaching and mastery learning, principals not only plan and organize professional development, they also participate in the process. They become learners alongside their staffs. Barth commented that the principal as learner "is critical because there is a striking connection between learning and collegiality."<sup>21</sup> Effective principals recognize the value of collaborative participation in the learning community as a way to build trust, collective responsibility, and to further the goal of improved student learning.<sup>22</sup>

Principals realize that keeping abreast of and informing staff about current research and practice is critical to school success. They emphasize and communicate that schools are learning communities and they provide both formal and informal opportunities for collaborative learning.<sup>23</sup>

Research regarding effective principals and their role in leading the learning community includes the following:

- Effective principals participate in learning alongside their staffs.<sup>24</sup>
- Effective principals ensure learning opportunities are afforded to all members of their staffs.<sup>25</sup>
- Principals of successful schools provide meaningful staff development.<sup>26</sup>

**Monitoring Curriculum and Instruction.** Effective principals focus on curriculum and instruction. Monitoring teacher practice helps to identify instructional strengths and weaknesses. Principals are aware of instructional practices in their school buildings, are knowledgeable about the curriculum standards, and ensure that they are taught.<sup>27</sup> Principals trust their teachers to effectively implement instruction but visit classrooms regularly to observe the results of that instruction.<sup>28</sup>

In effective schools, principals are able to judge the effectiveness of teaching and serve as role models for expected behaviors of school staff.<sup>29</sup> The emphasis on teaching and learning means that principals consciously limit activities that diminish instructional time.<sup>30</sup> They allocate resources based on identified need which may include: materials, staffing, and staff development.<sup>31</sup> They encourage teacher reflection regarding instructional practices and their impact on student achievement.<sup>32</sup>

Research related to principals' roles in monitoring curriculum and instruction indicates the following:

- Both teachers and principals believe it important that someone is positioned to guide the curriculum and to make decisions about staff development needs.<sup>33</sup>
- Effective principals ensure continuity in the school instructional program.<sup>34</sup>
- Principals must spend time in classrooms to monitor instructional programs, curriculum implementation, and the quality of instructional practices.<sup>35</sup>

## Performance Standard 2: School Climate

*The principal promotes the success of all students by developing, advocating, and sustaining an academically rigorous, positive, and safe school climate for all stakeholders.*

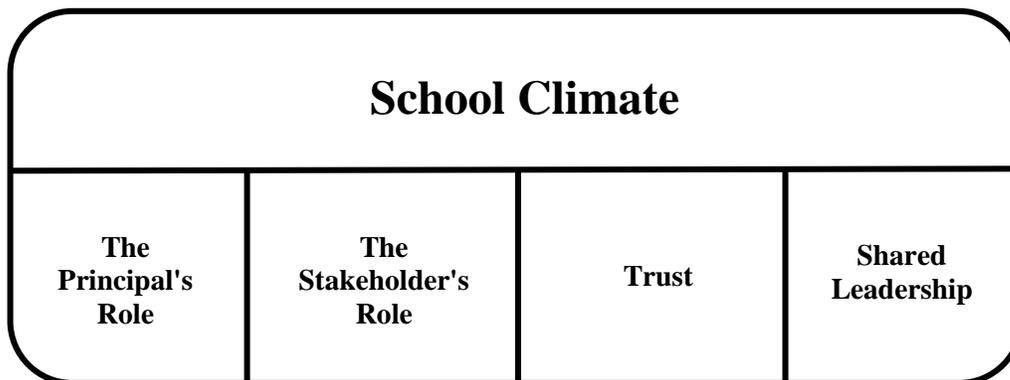
### What does school climate mean?

In general terms, school climate “is the relatively enduring quality of the school environment that is experienced by participants, affects their behavior, and is based on their collective perception about behavior in schools.”<sup>36</sup> More simply put, school climate “refers to the social and working relationships of staff and principals.”<sup>37</sup> When you enter the school’s front office, how does it feel? As you walk down the halls, what behaviors do you notice? What is the energy level of teachers and students in classrooms? Does the school community work as a team? All of these questions relate to school climate. These and many other factors affect the climate in a school.

### What does research say about school climate as it relates to school principals?

School climate affects everyone in the school community. Enlisting the support of all stakeholders is an important first step on the road to establishing and maintaining a positive climate. Since school climate influences student outcomes, staff satisfaction, and overall school morale, principals should identify and implement practices that foster a positive climate.

*Figure 2. School Climate Responsibilities*



**The Principal’s Role.** School climate and student performance are linked. A positive school climate focused on student learning is correlated to student achievement.<sup>38</sup> Successful schools have a school climate that is significantly more positive than their less successful counterparts.<sup>39</sup> Since principals play a pivotal role in fostering and sustaining school climate, it behooves them to concentrate effort in this area.<sup>40</sup> To maintain a positive school climate, principals should:

- Enlist the assistance of school community members (students, parents, staff, and community members) in helping to create a safe and positive learning environment.<sup>41</sup>
- Model respect and high expectations for all community members.<sup>42</sup>
- Share decision-making to maintain high school morale.<sup>43</sup>
- Maintain a current crisis and conflict action plan and implement it as necessary.<sup>44</sup>

- Cultivate a positive learning environment by using knowledge of the school community (social, cultural, leadership, and political dynamics).<sup>45</sup>

**The Stakeholder’s Role.** Stakeholder involvement in school success is well-documented. Kythreodis and Pashiardis note that positive parent-school relations are one of ten factors in successful school leadership.<sup>46</sup> Building professional relationships between school principals and staff is one of the critical principal responsibilities cited by Marzano and colleagues in a meta-analysis of school leadership research.<sup>47</sup> Parent and community outreach is identified by Cotton as an essential trait of effective principals.<sup>48</sup> Effective principals build positive relations between the parent and the school, build professional relationships with the staff, and provide outreach to parents and the greater community.

When applied to school principals, the adage “no man is an island” is most apropos. Shared decision-making and collaboration strengthen rather than dilute leadership capacity in a school community. Creating a positive and safe learning environment is a job for all—students, parents, staff, and central office personnel. Relationships matter. Time taken to build relationships paves the way for productive gatherings that move forward in the right direction. As stakeholders work to reach consensus around school norms and expectations, the savvy principal ensures all voices are heard. Importantly, within this collaborative effort, is the need to focus on and never lose sight of the vision and school goals.<sup>49</sup> It is the responsibility of the principal to maintain the focus and the forward momentum.

The research surrounding principal and stakeholder involvement in school climate indicates the following:

- Principals possess the authority, power, and position to impact school climate.<sup>50</sup>
- A positive relationship that exists between school climate and leadership affects overall school effectiveness.<sup>51</sup>
- Fundamentally important to establishing and maintaining school success is the importance of stakeholder involvement and relationship building.<sup>52</sup>

**Trust.** Trust is a precursor to success in any relationship—be it organizational or individual. If members of a school community are distrustful of others’ motives and actions, that community will most certainly fail. Moreover, anxiety, isolation, and estrangement are correlated with the absence of trust.<sup>53</sup> The effective school principal leads from a position of trust—modeled and fostered daily in the school environment.<sup>54</sup> Principals desiring a trustful environment can cultivate one by sharing information, power, and decision-making with teachers.<sup>55</sup>

Everyone in the organization benefits when trust abounds. Schools with high levels of trust are more open to new ideas, more likely to reach out to the community, and commit to organizational goals.<sup>56</sup> Teachers demonstrate greater professionalism when principals evidence trust and when they adopt a professional rather than a bureaucratic orientation.<sup>57</sup> Students are the recipients of higher levels of teacher trust when trust is a prevailing culture trait within a school faculty.<sup>58</sup> Multiple studies indicate that increased collaboration, improved academic productivity, and risk-tolerant climates are positively associated with trust in schools.<sup>59</sup> As is evidenced by the research base, trust between members of a school community benefits all members.

There are many facets of trust. Some of these include: benevolence, competence, honesty, openness, and reliability.<sup>60</sup> Principals can demonstrate these qualities and inspire trust in others in many ways. Just a few of these include:

- Making the time to listen to others;<sup>61</sup>
- Asking others for input from members of the school community;<sup>62</sup>
- Making decisions that foster student safety and achievement;<sup>63</sup>
- Being visible and participating in school activities; and<sup>64</sup>
- Supporting staff as both professionals and individuals.<sup>65</sup>

**Shared Leadership.** As the role of the principal has evolved from a primarily managerial one to both managerial and instructional, duties and responsibilities have increased. In order to meet the demands of the job it is increasingly necessary to share leadership. Paradoxically, when principals give power away they oftentimes become more powerful.<sup>66</sup> This enables them to narrow their focus and concentration to factors that contribute directly to school effectiveness.

Shared leadership has been defined as “multiple sources of guidance and direction, following the contours of expertise in an organization, made coherent through a common culture.”<sup>67</sup> In essence, shared leadership results in the creation of multiple leaders within a school. It affects principals and stakeholders in different ways. For the principal, it lightens the load and provides support. For the stakeholder, it highlights the important role that everyone has in guiding and directing the school community toward the vision and goals. When decision-making becomes a team effort, the principal is more fully able to act as diagnostician and facilitator—identifying issues and resources necessary to address the issues.<sup>68</sup> With this structure, the principal does not relinquish responsibility, rather he/she promotes others, encourages shared decision making and builds relationships.<sup>69</sup> All of this contributes to a positive school climate.

The research surrounding school climate and shared leadership includes these findings:

- In effective schools, principals distribute administrative tasks and create multiple leaders.<sup>70</sup>
- Shared leadership has a positive effect on school improvement and reading achievement.<sup>71</sup>
- Shared leadership has a positive effect on school improvement and math achievement.<sup>72</sup>

## Performance Standard 3: Human Resources Management

*The principal fosters effective human resources management through the selection, induction, support, evaluation, and retention of quality instructional and support personnel.*

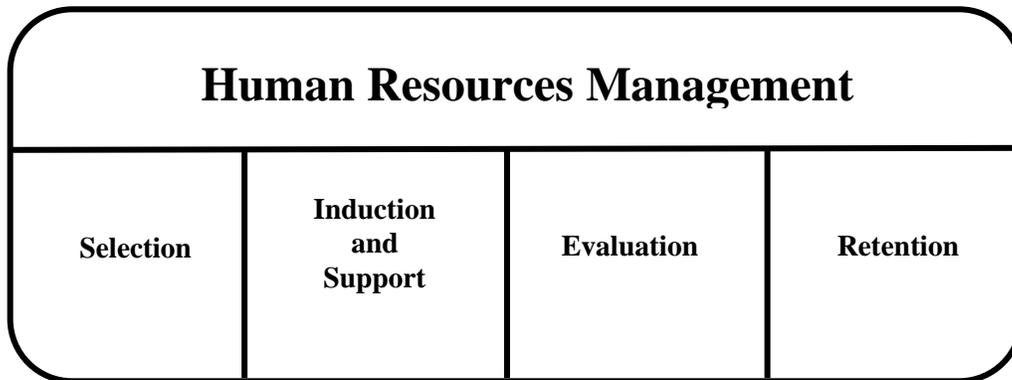
### What does human resources management mean?

In general terms, human resources management encompasses "selecting quality teachers and staff, inducting and supporting new teachers, mentoring novice teachers, providing professional growth opportunities, and retaining quality staff."<sup>73</sup>

### What does research say about human resources management as it relates to school principals?

Effective principals understand that one of their most important responsibilities is the selection, induction, support, evaluation, and retention of quality instructional and staff personnel.<sup>74</sup> They also understand that supporting, affirming, and finding opportunities for teachers and staff to grow professionally affects the bottom line, student achievement.<sup>75</sup> Targeting the right people to the right position is critical, and effective principals take this responsibility seriously.<sup>76</sup> As stated by Horng and Loeb, "school principals can have a tremendous effect on student learning through the teachers they hire, how they assign those teachers to classrooms, how they retain teachers, and how they create opportunities for teachers to improve."<sup>77</sup>

*Figure 3. Human Resources Management Responsibilities*



A study by Beteille, Kalogrides, and Loeb found that:

- School principals' organizational management practices—particularly, in the area of personnel management—appear to play a critical role in improving schools.
- Effective schools retain higher-quality teachers and remove lower-quality teachers.
- Teachers who work in more effective schools improve more rapidly than do those in less effective ones.<sup>78</sup>

**Selection.** Taking the time to make careful personnel selection decisions pays dividends later on. The principal's impact on school effectiveness may be indirect, but selecting quality teachers has a direct effect on student outcomes. Equally important is the careful selection of support staff.

Portin and colleagues note that principals in their study talked about the impact of support staff on the climate of the school.<sup>79</sup>

A study of 90/90/90 school principals is illustrative. These schools are composed of a student body of at least 90 percent minority, 90 percent receive free or reduced lunch, and the passing rate on standardized achievement tests is 90 percent or better. One of the factors cited in beating the odds is their “mindful allocation of staffing resources.”<sup>80</sup> Setting schools up for success means principals staff their schools with quality instructional and staff personnel. Such is the case at these schools.

Additional findings from various research studies indicate:

- Principals trained in research-based hiring practices are more likely to use those practices in teacher interviews and selection. Practices include: multiple interviewers, prepared questions, and scoring rubrics.<sup>81</sup>
- Effective principals understand the school district's hiring system and use this knowledge to acquire the best qualified people for the positions they seek to fill.<sup>82</sup>

**Induction and Support.** Quality induction programs positively impact teacher retention.<sup>83</sup> “*Induction* is the process of systematically training and supporting new teachers, beginning before the first day of school and continuing through the first two or three years of teaching.”<sup>84</sup> Principals have an important role to play in fostering and sustaining these programs. With high teacher turnover rates showing no signs of abatement, the savvy principal provides as much systematic training and support to teachers as is needed throughout induction. Wong outlines overarching objectives of induction programs.<sup>85</sup> These objectives include: (1) easing the transition into teaching, (2) improving classroom management and instruction, (3) promoting the district's culture, and (4) increasing teacher retention rate.

In a review of 15 research studies on induction programs, Ingersoll and Strong identified several interesting findings:<sup>86</sup>

- Beginning teachers who participate in induction have higher satisfaction, commitment, or retention than those who do not participate.
- Beginning teachers who participate in induction have more on-task students and viable lesson plans than those who do not participate.
- Beginning teachers who participate in induction are more likely to use effective student questioning practices and are more likely to adjust classroom activities to meet students' interests than those who do not participate.
- Beginning teachers who participate in induction are more likely to maintain a positive classroom atmosphere and demonstrate successful classroom management than those who do not participate.
- Beginning teachers who participate in induction have students with higher test scores or demonstrate greater gains on academic achievement tests than those who do not participate.

There are practices that principals can adopt that reduce new teacher turnover rates.<sup>87</sup> Smith and Ingersoll culled data from the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), administered by the National Center for Education Statistics. The statistics included all beginning teachers in the United States during the 1999-2000 academic year. Several factors appeared to affect turnover and retention rates. Researchers found that matching mentors and mentees by teaching specialty—subject or grade level—appeared to reduce turnover rate. Establishing a common planning time for collaboration was effective in reducing turnover. Finally, being part of an external network of teachers also reduced turnover. It behooves principals to keep these ideas in mind as they work to induct and support new teachers. Providing a culture of support where new teachers are supported by all staff can reduce new teacher attrition.<sup>88</sup>

**Evaluation.** The two major purposes of teacher/staff evaluation are professional growth and performance accountability. Though viewed by some as mutually exclusive, Stronge argues that:

there is room in evaluation systems for both accountability and performance improvement purposes. Indeed, evaluation systems that reflect both accountability and personal growth dimensions are not only desirable but also necessary for evaluation to productively serve the needs of individuals and the community at large.<sup>89</sup>

The National Education Policy Center advocates an evaluation system that “targets both continual improvement of the teaching staff and timely dismissal of teachers who cannot or will not improve.”<sup>90</sup> An effective system meets both of these objectives.

If teacher evaluation is to benefit teachers, principals must consider ways to improve the evaluation process so that it is marked by quality characteristics.<sup>91</sup> These characteristics include: positive climate, clear communications, teachers/staff and principals committed to the evaluation, and practices that are technically sound.

A positive climate is one characterized by mutual trust. “Evaluation conducted in an environment that fosters mutual trust between evaluator (representing the institution) and evaluatees holds the greatest potential for benefiting both parties.”<sup>92</sup> A second characteristic is clear communication between teachers and principals during the evaluative process. Two-way communications where both parties are encouraged and able to share ideas and interpretations fosters mutual understanding. Principals and teachers committed to teacher evaluation is a third quality characteristic that can improve a teacher evaluation process. When principals are committed to the teacher evaluation system and prioritize their commitment, the evaluation process becomes a vehicle for teacher growth and improvement. Since effective teachers impact student achievement, a teacher evaluation system that improves teacher effectiveness can serve as a tool for increasing student achievement. Principals can demonstrate this priority by setting aside time and focusing attention on the evaluative process and by allocating resources that support the evaluation system and teacher improvement practices.<sup>93</sup> Finally, principals should ensure their evaluative practices are technically sound. This means principals participate in training to build knowledge and understanding of the teacher/staff evaluation system.<sup>94</sup>

Research related to these quality characteristics is summarized:

- Teachers/staff who participate more fully in the evaluation conference are more satisfied with both the conference and the principal than those who participate less.<sup>95</sup>
- More trustworthy relationships are built by principals who balance caring and high expectations than relationships characterized by high caring and low expectations or low caring and high expectations. Balance is key.<sup>96</sup>
- Teacher involvement at every level of the evaluation process is a requirement for an effective evaluation system.<sup>97</sup>

Multiple data sources inform understanding in every context. Teacher/staff evaluation is no different. Using multiple data sources or measurement tools increases information about teacher/staff effectiveness and thus provides a more fully rounded picture of teacher/staff levels of competency. Moreover, the use of different measurement tools can offset weaknesses found in others. Evaluation tools that are used without proper training can impact the validity of an evaluation.<sup>98</sup>

Teacher observation is the measurement tool used most often by principals during the teacher evaluation process. A study of measurement tools by Goe, Bell, and Little identified both strengths and weaknesses. Observations are feasible and can provide useful information. However, observations provide limited information because of the narrow focus on instructional delivery and classroom management. The whole of teachers' work—e.g., instructional planning, student assessment, professional development—is left unexamined.<sup>99</sup> The National Education Policy Center advocates multiple measures to include: classroom observation, instructional artifacts, portfolios, teacher self-reports, student surveys, and value-added assessment.<sup>100</sup> Though each has strengths and weaknesses, when combined, they can provide a holistic view of teacher/staff performance. This, in turn, provides the principal with both quantitative and qualitative data to fully inform the evaluation product.

Effective school principals understand the division guidelines of the personnel evaluation system. The following are research findings related to evaluation:

- School principals affect student learning primarily by hiring and supporting high-quality teachers and staff.<sup>101</sup>
- Effective principals hire, support, and retain good teachers while removing less-effective teachers.<sup>102</sup>
- School principals' abilities in performing evaluation affect the ability to remove teachers due to incompetence.<sup>103</sup>
- Remediating or removing low-performing teachers is the responsibility of the school principal.<sup>104</sup>
- Effective principals continue to document deficiencies while working to help struggling teachers so that they have the necessary documentation should dismissal become necessary.<sup>105</sup>

**Retention.** Approximately one-third of new teachers leave teaching during their first three years.<sup>106</sup> Within five years, one-half of new teachers leave the field. Providing an induction program and support for new teachers helps to reduce that rate and keeps new teachers in the classroom.<sup>107</sup> Principals can impact teacher loss in their schools. Supporting a systematic induction program is beneficial and a win-win strategy for all involved.

Marshak and Klotz identify specific actions principals can take to support new teachers.<sup>108</sup> The first three goals focus on the school and the division. Mentors, supported by principals, help new teachers to:

- become familiar with the school's culture, traditions, and rituals;
- learn more about the community's goals for education; and
- gain insight into district and school policies and procedures.

Instructionally, principals support new teachers by:

- assisting with instructional issues, such as helping new teachers learn to adjust delivery based on student need;
- helping new teachers build more skill in challenging students to think on a higher level and providing higher-level learning experiences; and
- assisting and supporting new teachers as they develop the necessary skills needed to collect, analyze, and apply data instructionally to increase student learning.

Principals also support new teachers by:

- encouraging and helping them to integrate new technologies to enhance instruction;
- supporting and encouraging ongoing collaborative efforts within and among grade levels and subject areas; and
- educating and supporting new teachers so that their instruction is aligned with state and national standards thereby ensuring students are taught what will be tested.

## Performance Standard 4: Organizational Management

*The principal fosters the success of all students by supporting, managing, and overseeing the school's organization, operation, and use of resources.*

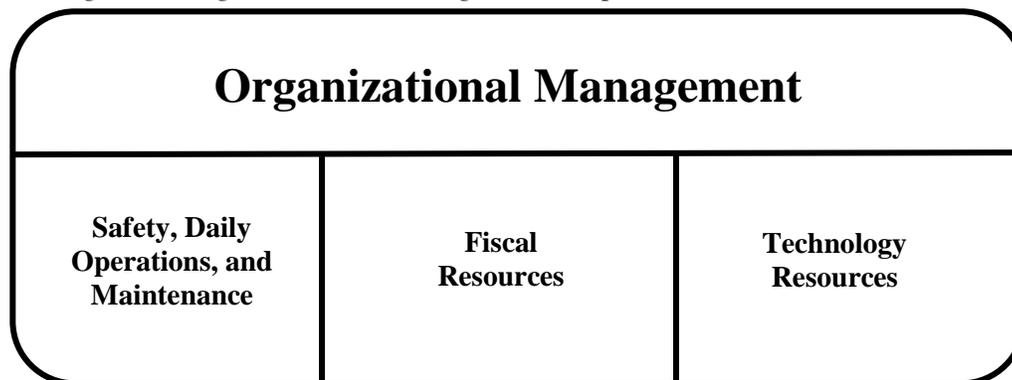
### What does organizational management mean?

In general terms, organizational management pertains to those responsibilities relating to the functioning of the school. These include, but are not limited to: (1) coordinating a safe and orderly school environment, daily operations, and facility maintenance, (2) using data in organization management, (3) seeking and managing fiscal resources, and (4) organizing and managing technology resources.<sup>109</sup>

### What does research say about organizational management as it relates to school principals?

Organizational management is a primary responsibility of the school principal. A smoothly functioning school requires a principal's focused time and effort on those factors that keep it running so. More than anything else, the school must first be a safe and positive learning environment for all. School principals are charged to ensure this.<sup>110</sup> However, they have other duties and responsibilities. They use data to inform decisions and to plan strategies for school improvement. School principals are also responsible for budgetary matters pertaining to the school. And, in more and more schools, technology plays a central role in teaching and learning. Principals must organize and manage their technology resources. If a school is to function efficiently and effectively careful thought and committed time must be allocated to each of these areas.

*Figure 4. Organizational Management Responsibilities*



**School Safety, Daily Operations, and Facility Maintenance.** The effective principal addresses each of these three areas realizing they can impact a smoothly functioning school. Each is addressed in turn.

School Safety. A school principal prioritizes safety of students and staff above all else. Routines and procedures are created and implemented to ensure a safe, orderly, and positive environment. In their meta-analysis of 69 empirical studies on school leadership, Marzano and colleagues

identified order as one of 21 responsibilities of principals. More specifically, they noted evidenced behaviors to include:

- Established routines regarding orderly school operations, which are understood and followed by staff.
- Established structures, rules, and procedures, provided and reinforced to the staff.
- Established structures, rules, and procedures, provided and reinforced to the students.<sup>111</sup>

Likewise, Cotton’s research confirms that maintenance of a safe and orderly school environment is a priority of effective principals.<sup>112</sup> Cotton found that effective principals have behavior policies that are established with solicited input from staff and students. They set clear expectations for student behavior. Discipline is fairly and consistently enforced. Finally, teachers are granted authority to maintain the established discipline policies. Additionally, Cotton noted that crisis management plans are in place and current, and a trained school crisis management team is on board and ready to handle situations effectively.

*Daily Operations and Facility Management.* Principals complete a wide range of tasks on any given day. Some may seem unrelated to student outcomes. However, Lashway contends that even mundane tasks can affect student outcomes.<sup>113</sup> For instance, heating and cooling problems can certainly affect classrooms and student learning. It behooves the principal to keep the school running efficiently so that maximum learning occurs.

Master schedules, usually an administrative task, can impact student learning outcomes. Thoughtful and careful consideration while scheduling can result in more time for instruction.<sup>114</sup> Scheduling that maximizes blocks of instructional time, and decreases “wasted time,” is beneficial to all. Building in co-teaching opportunities benefits both students with special needs and others as teaching capacity is doubled. More needs can be met when principals include key personnel in the collaborative creation of a master schedule.<sup>115</sup>

**Seeking and Managing Fiscal Resources.** The school principal is charged with responsible management of resources. This requires a thorough understanding of local school board and state policy.<sup>116</sup> It also requires a cycle of actions to plan and oversee the budget.

Resources include materials—books and equipment—but also included in the definition are opportunities for staff development and professional collaboration.<sup>117</sup> Sometimes managing resources requires creativity to maximize teaching and learning. Research indicates that:

- Effective school principals use resources creatively to improve teaching and learning.<sup>118</sup>
- Strong organizational managers are effective in allocating budgets and resources.<sup>119</sup>
- Schools showing academic improvement are more likely to have strong organizational managers.<sup>120</sup>

**Organizing and Managing Technology Resources.** As schools increase technology capabilities and applications, principals are expected to organize and manage those resources effectively. Principals must concern themselves with technology issues related to: instructionally appropriate allocation, equity, sustainability, and training. To facilitate student learning and staff

productivity, technology must be accessible and in working order. In addition, smart school principals hire technology staff who fully understand how best to capitalize on and exploit technology use for teaching and learning.

In a case study of 14 schools implementing technology use in both reading and mathematics, schools that achieved learning gains with technology were characterized in this way:<sup>121</sup>

- Schools provided support for implementation.
- Instructional vision between principals and teachers concerning how best to implement software use was consistent.
- Principal support included scheduling access to equipment and collaborative planning time for teachers to co-learn about the technology.
- Teachers collaborated and supported one another on the use of the technology.

## Performance Standard 5: Communication and Community Relations

*The principal fosters the success of all students by communicating and collaborating effectively with stakeholders.*

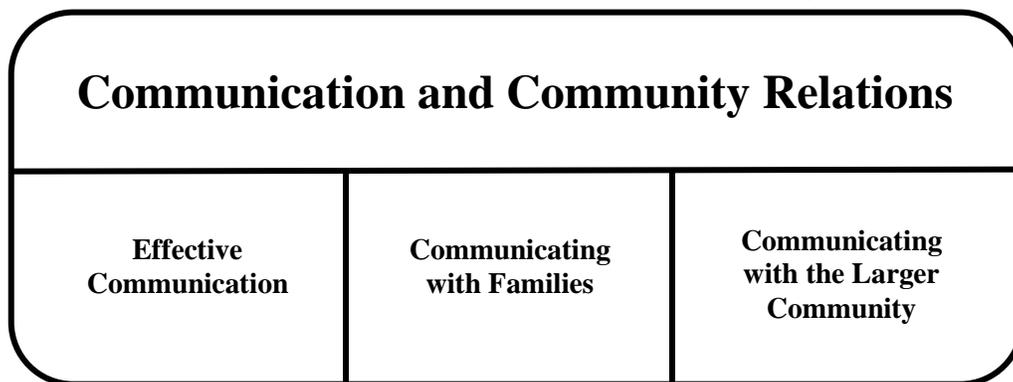
### What does communication and community relations mean?

In general terms, communicating and community relations “consists of staff members’ personal relations with colleagues, students, parents, and the larger community.”<sup>122</sup>

### What does research say about communication as it relates to school principals?

Communicating clearly and establishing strong relations with the community are critical school principal responsibilities. Increasingly, principals find themselves not only responsible to faculty, staff, and students but also responsible to parents, policy makers, and the larger community. Effective principals unite these various stakeholders into a cohesive group moving toward the same quality goal: educating children and raising student performance.<sup>123</sup> One of the ways they do this is through relationship building and effective communications. Effective principals understand they do not act in a vacuum; they realize the importance of bringing stakeholders into the mix in a collaborative decision-making model. Moreover, they reach out to stakeholders on a continual basis.<sup>124</sup>

*Figure 5. Communication and Community Relations Responsibilities*



**Effective Communication.** Effective school principals foster communication with and between all school constituents on an ongoing basis.<sup>125</sup> They realize they do not have all the answers. They are good listeners and value the opportunity to hear alternate views on topics.

Today's technologies offer an array of communication possibilities and opportunities.<sup>126</sup> Porterfield and Carnes advocate the use of both traditional and new media to open the lines of communication to build parent and community trust. They offer five suggestions for improving communications:<sup>127</sup>

(1) Make communications planning a top priority.

Communication planning should be a consideration whenever new programs are designed, test dates changed, or rules revised. Questions principals should ask themselves are: (a) Who should know about these changes? and (b) How do we assure they know? The answers to these questions ensure that all the affected parties are identified and a plan for communicating changes is in place. In other words, the authors advocate school principals, "get out ahead of the story, put your frame around it, and plan ahead."<sup>128</sup>

(2) Leave the office and network with others.

Networking builds relationships by increasing mutual understanding. It can include: being available to news agencies, attending committee meetings of special groups (e.g., special education and gifted education), breakfasting with PTA officers, and meeting with faculty liaison groups. This demonstrates that the principal values these groups and is anxious to listen to their viewpoints and issues of concern.

(3) Be aware of the different audiences served.

School principals serve varied constituencies. They have different interests and concerns. Do not lump all parents into one category; they are not monolithic. Ensure that employees are the first to hear of changes, that they hear the whole story, and they fully understand the ramifications. Then enlist their support to market the changes to parents and community members.

(4) Invite naysayers to work with you.

Look for those who find fault. Enlist them in efforts to realize the vision. Listen to their arguments and try to appreciate their views. When critics are invited in and become familiar with the school environment, relationships are built and new understanding is often forged. This is a way to become a team rather than adversaries.

(5) Be strategic with available technology.

Become familiar with how the school community receives its information. Parents under 50 oftentimes get news from online sources rather than printed newspapers. Survey parents to find out and then focus communication efforts in these areas.

**Communicating with Families.** It behooves all school principals to involve parents in the school community. Principals who reach out to involve parents and community members are more successful than others.<sup>129</sup> These principals articulate the school vision to parents.

In a series of focus groups and a nationally representative survey of 1,006 parents of current and recent high school students from urban, suburban, and rural communities, Bridgeland et al. note that among other findings: (1) high-performing schools do a better job of communicating with parents, (2) high-performing schools are more likely to be perceived as encouraging parental

involvement, (3) parents of students in low-performing schools are much less likely than their peers to talk with their children's teachers, and (4) high-performing schools are more likely than low-performing schools to notify and engage parents if their child is having performance issues at school.<sup>130</sup>

A review of existing literature on parental involvement found that some types of involvement benefit the school directly:

- Telling parents that their involvement and support greatly enhances their children's school progress.
- Fostering parent involvement from the time that students first enter school.
- Teaching parents that they are role models for reading behavior.
- Developing parent programs that are focused on instruction.
- Working to engage parents of disadvantaged students.
- Emphasizing that parents are partners of the school and that the school values their involvement.<sup>131</sup>

**Communicating with the Larger Community.** School principals serve as advocates of their schools. As such, it is their responsibility to “communicate a positive image of their schools.”<sup>132</sup> Support from mass media sources is important; therefore, principals should develop positive relationships with various media outlets. According to a study by Brookings Institution, Americans want news coverage of their public schools. This means school principals must “learn how to navigate the new digital ecosystem.”<sup>133</sup> Some of the suggestions include: developing relationships with journalists, creating in-house news networks focusing on positive school outcomes, and connecting local stories to national studies and trends. Reaching out to the media strengthens school vision and develops relationships undergirded by shared purpose and mutual support.<sup>134</sup>

Schools are part of a larger community network. Their effectiveness is in part influenced by these other agencies. School principals can garner resources, enlist support, and form relationships that are mutually beneficial. Forming partnerships can assist in furthering the school vision to the larger community and can directly benefit students and teachers.

In a study of partnering benefits, two Ontario secondary schools heavily involved in community partnerships served as the sample. Conclusions drawn about partnering benefits include: educators met the needs of their students and programs that could not be addressed in the school; partnering provided material, financial, and social support; principals obtained district resources unavailable to other schools; and the schools' reputations within the communities were raised. Partnering with outside agencies can benefit students, teachers, programs, and participating agencies.<sup>135</sup>

## Performance Standard 6: Professionalism

*The principal fosters the success of students by demonstrating professional standards and ethics, engaging in continuous professional development, and contributing to the profession.*

### What does professionalism mean?

In general terms, professionalism is defined as “the conduct, aims, or qualities that characterize or mark a profession or a professional person.”<sup>136</sup>

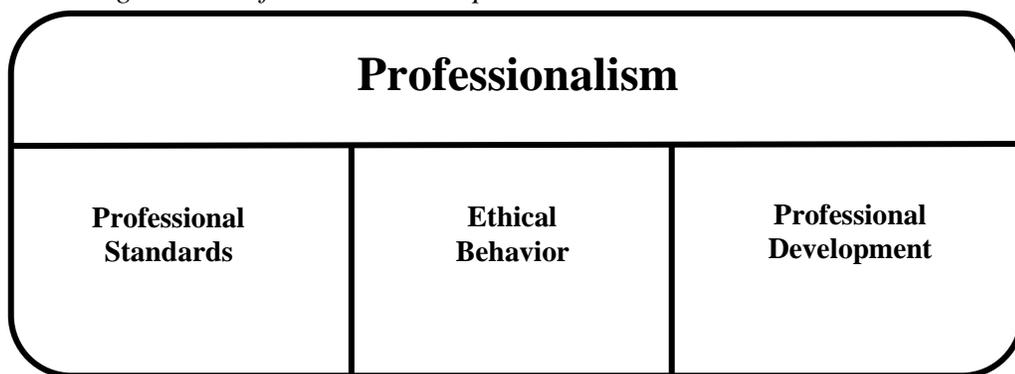
### What does research say about professionalism as it relates to school principals?

School principals set the standard for professionalism in the school building and the community. This includes demonstrating professional standards and engaging in ethical behavior. As role models for teachers and staff, they engage in continuous professional development and contribute to the profession.

Wurtzel outlines tenets of professionalism and applies them to teachers. They are equally appropriate in describing principal professionalism. A professional:

- owes his/her primary duty to his/her clients;
- is accountable to that profession for results;
- has a duty to improve his/her own practice;
- has a duty to improve common or collective practice in the profession;
- adheres to a body of specialized knowledge, agreed-upon standards of practice, and specific protocols for performance; and
- is expected to exercise professional judgment.<sup>137</sup>

*Figure 6. Professionalism Responsibilities*



**Professional Standards.** The school principal has numerous duties and responsibilities; they continue to increase and change rapidly. The job has become increasingly complex. Compounding this complexity are the national, state and local accrediting and governing bodies

that have each established their own performance standards and guiding principles. The result is multiple standards which can confuse or even contradict one another.<sup>138</sup>

Leading performance standards for the principalship should support and complement the multi-faceted role of school leaders. Virginia's *Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Principals* and the 2008 Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards are complementary. Moreover, the Virginia Principal Evaluation System and Council of Chief State School Officers standards are also complementary. When principals adhere to and demonstrate the professional standards set forth in the Virginia Principal Evaluation System, they can be assured that they are practicing professionalism and acting as role models to the school and larger community.

**Ethical Behavior.** School principals serve as role models, providing the moral purpose for their schools.<sup>139</sup> Moral purpose can be defined as “social responsibility to others and the environment.”<sup>140</sup> In an educational environment, the school principal has a responsibility to students, staff, and the larger school community. First and foremost is the responsibility to behave ethically.

A survey of 180 K-12 educators found a correlation between effective leadership and ethical decision-making. Survey respondents ranked honesty and integrity as the most important characteristics educators value in principals.<sup>141</sup> Effective principals are fair and honest, have integrity, and expect to demonstrate ethical behavior.<sup>142</sup> They share their ethical beliefs with faculty, staff, parents, and students.<sup>143</sup>

**Professional Development.** To hone skills and continue to evolve in a highly skilled profession that is school principalship requires continuous professional development. In a study that focused on why good principals stay in the profession, professional development was key.<sup>144</sup> These principals viewed and described themselves as lifelong learners.

A study of 39 elementary schools whose principals participated in professional development found that: (1) the more professional development principals received, the more they were actively involved in the professional development of their teachers, (2) those teachers who received more professional development taught lessons that were of higher instructional quality, and (3) those schools where instructional quality was higher had higher levels of academic achievement.

When comparing effective professional development programs with those that are less so, LaPointe and Davis found that effective principals attended more professional development and found the sessions to be more helpful. They were also more likely to attend professional development along with their teachers, and were almost twice as likely to make visits to other schools. These principals were also more likely to participate in development networks with other principals, to mentor other principals, and to be willing to observe and critique fellow principals.<sup>145</sup>

Research findings about principal professional development include:

- Effective principals recognize the importance of professional development.<sup>146</sup>
- Effective principals participate in a variety of professional development activities. These include: attending conferences, networking with others, mentoring other principals, and observing other principals.<sup>147</sup>
- Research-based professional development programs providing what principals need to be successful are now available.<sup>148</sup>

## Performance Standard 7: Student Academic Progress

*The principal's leadership results in acceptable, measurable progress based on established standards.*

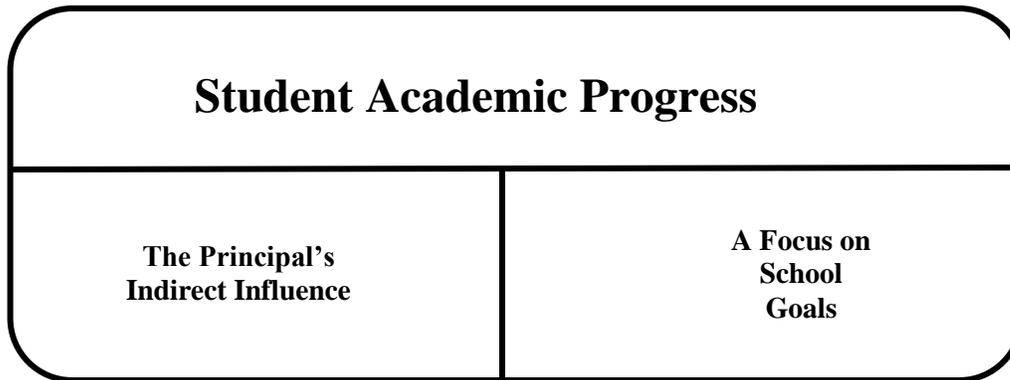
### What does student academic progress mean?

In general terms, student progress is often equated with student academic achievement: the academic growth that a student makes as he/she proceeds through the school years. There are other measures of student success, but for purposes of this document, student progress will refer to student academic achievement.

### What does research say about student academic progress as it relates to school principals?

Research in the field has consistently revealed that school leadership has an impact on student achievement gains or progress over years.<sup>149</sup> Waters, Marzano, and McNulty conducted a meta-analysis of research on effects of principals' leadership practices on student achievement. After analyzing studies conducted over a 30-year period, they found that the effectiveness of a school's leadership is significantly associated with increased student academic performance.<sup>150</sup>

*Figure 7. Student Academic Progress Responsibilities*



**The Principal's Indirect Influence on Student Academic Progress.** There is a link between school principals and student achievement. However, it is indirect. Hallinger and Heck noted the influence of principals on "those who come into more frequent direct contact with students."<sup>151</sup> Likewise, Mazzeo reported that school principals "exert a powerful, if indirect, influence on teaching quality and student learning"<sup>152</sup> Cotton identified three ways in which principals of effective schools influence student achievement: (1) they give their teachers the autonomy they need in their classrooms to organize and manage as they see fit; (2) they act to ensure instructional time is maximized by minimizing interruptions; and (3) they focus on student achievement.<sup>153</sup> Simply stated, a school with strong leadership can have a positive effect on student learning, whereas a school with ineffective leadership can negatively affect student achievement.<sup>154</sup> One aspect of effective leadership involves the use of data and how this can impact student achievement.

Using data to inform decisions is an intentional act designed to link school goals with goal attainment. Data is what fuels goal formation and goal realization. Usdan and colleagues summarized the important role that principals play in teaching and learning improvement saying that principals “must collect, analyze, and use data in ways that fuel excellence.”<sup>155</sup> Effective principals monitor progress, identify performance, and use the information to make program adjustments.<sup>156</sup> They also encourage their staffs to use data to inform instruction and provide training to ensure they can do this effectively and efficiently.<sup>157</sup>

**A Focus on School Goals and Student Academic Progress.** Waters, Marzano, and McNulty identified a number of principal behaviors related to vision that were also associated with student learning. These included establishing clear goals and fostering shared beliefs. They found the average effect size between leadership and student achievement is .25. That means a one standard deviation improvement in leadership effectiveness can translate into an increase of 10 percentile points in student achievement on a standardized, norm-referenced test. In addition, they also found certain leadership responsibilities are particularly associated with student achievement. For instance:

<b>Leadership Responsibilities</b>	<i>The extent to which the principal...</i>	<b>Average Effect Size</b>
Situational awareness	is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school, and uses this information to address current and potential problems	.33
Intellectual stimulation	ensures the faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices, and makes the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school’s culture	.32
Input	involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies	.30
Change Agent	is willing to and actively challenges the status quo	.30
Culture	fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation	.29
Outreach	is an advocate and spokesperson for the school to all stakeholders	.28
Monitors/Evaluates	monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning	.28
Order	establishes a set of standard operating procedures and routines	.26
Resources	provides teachers with materials and professional development necessary for the successful execution of their jobs	.26

Affirmation	recognizes and celebrates school accomplishments and acknowledges failures	.25
Ideals/Beliefs	communicates and operates from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling	.25
Discipline	protects teachers from issues and influences that would detract from their teaching time of focus	.24
Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	is knowledgeable about current curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices	.24
Communication	establishes strong lines of communication with teachers and among teachers	.23

Adapted from Waters, Marzano, and McNulty, 2003, p. 5.

Similarly, a meta-analysis by Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe inductively derived leadership dimensions that have been supported by research as influencing student outcomes:<sup>158</sup>

- Setting, communicating, and monitoring learning goals, standards, and expectations, and involving staff and others in the process so that there is clarity and consensus about goals.
- Strategic resourcing which involves aligning resource selection and allocation to priority teaching goals.
- Direct involvement in the support and evaluation of teaching through regular classroom visits and provisions for formative and summative feedback to teachers.
- Direct oversight of curriculum through schoolwide coordination across classes and year levels, and alignment to school goals.
- Leadership that not only promotes but directly participates with teachers in formal or informal professional learning.
- Protecting time for teaching and learning by reducing external pressures and interruptions and establishing an orderly and supportive environment both inside and outside classrooms.

## END NOTES

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- <sup>10</sup>Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008.
- <sup>11</sup>Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008, p. 5.
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- <sup>21</sup>Barth, 1985.
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- <sup>28</sup>Portin et al., 2003.
- <sup>29</sup>Fink & Resnick, 2001; Marzano et al., 2005.
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- <sup>82</sup> Peterson, 2002; Portin, 2003.

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- <sup>156</sup> Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004.
- <sup>157</sup> Snipes, Doolittle, & Herlihy, 2002; Togneri & Anderson, 2003.
- <sup>158</sup> Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008.

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