

COMPETENCY 1.0 THE PRINCIPAL KNOWS HOW TO SHAPE CAMPUS CULTURE BY FACILITATING THE DEVELOPMENT, ARTICULATION, IMPLEMENTATION, AND STEWARDSHIP OF A VISION OF LEARNING THAT IS SHARED AND SUPPORTED BY THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY.**Skill 1.1 Create a campus culture that sets high expectations, promotes learning, and provides intellectual stimulation for self, students, and staff.**

One of the most important jobs of an instructional leader is to change the prevailing culture of a school. Roland Barth wrote that “a school's culture has far more influence on life and learning in the schoolhouse than the president of the country, the state department of education, the superintendent, the school board, or even the principal, teachers, and parents can ever have.”

Principals are charged with leaving “no child behind” and this involves a fundamental change in the culture of the school. It is no longer acceptable for the majority of students to do well. Educators are now required to ensure high levels of learning for all students. Today’s school leaders must lead the staff and community in efforts to close the achievement gap between high and low performers, develop students' thinking and problem-solving skills, and attend to students' social and emotional development.

School leaders must articulate and implement an agreed vision of learning, and ensure that it is shared by the school community. Leadership to create a campus culture of high expectations requires a sense of urgency and a mix of pressure and support. If a principal is assigned to lead a school where many students are struggling, there is a need to fast track the change by pushing hard on standards, providing quality support material and examples of successful practice, and providing focused professional development. As student achievement increases, the principal should shift to capacity building to encourage local ownership. Leaders should strive to move from tighter to looser control and from external control to internal commitment.

Michael Fullan has written about the culture of “dependency” among schools—the tendency to wait for solutions from outside. Any kind of improvement is a function of learning to do the right thing in the setting where you work. Ultimately no amount of outside motivation can specify the best solutions for a particular situation. Principals who help their schools to form Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) embrace the notion that the primary purpose of a school is learning, not just teaching. Educators in PLCs examine the practices of their schools to find ways to ensure that all children will learn. Professional learning communities continuously examine what is worthwhile and how to get there.

- School staff members must work together to figure out what is needed to achieve the goal of “no child left behind”.
- Internal commitment and ingenuity does not come from outside the school; expertise lies within.
- Change is forever. Problems don't stay solved, so you have to keep learning to do the right thing over and over again.

"Schools that establish high expectations for all students . . . and provide the support necessary to achieve these expectations . . . have high rates of academic success (Brook et al., 1989; Edmonds, 1986; Howard, 1990; Levin, 1988; Rutter et al., 1979; Slavin et al., 1989). Successful schools share certain characteristics: an emphasis on academics, clear expectations and regulations, high levels of student participation, and alternative resources such as library facilities, vocational work opportunities, art, music, and extracurricular activities. Conveying positive and high expectations to students occurs in several ways. One of the most obvious and powerful is through personal relationships in which teachers and other school staff communicate to students, “This work is important; I know you can do it; I won't give up on you” (Howard, 1990). Successful teachers look for children's strengths and interests, and use these as starting points for learning. A relationship that conveys high expectations to students can internalize these beliefs in students and develop self-esteem and self-efficacy.

Skill 1.2 Ensure that parents and other members of the community are an integral part of the campus culture.

All parents have deeply personal reasons to support the school's efforts: they want their child to do well in school. Some parents will have strong opinions about how the principal should run a school; if they were star students they will want the principal to replicate their school experiences. But many parents have memories of their own schooling that are less than positive, and these memories hamper their involvement in the school. Principals must constantly communicate the school's vision, so that parents understand what the school is trying to accomplish. Uninformed parents and community members can derail your improvement efforts.

Educating the parents and community about the school's programs, goals and results is a key responsibility of the school principal, but such communication will be different for every school building and school community. Your parents are as diverse as your student population, with varying degrees of understanding and prior knowledge. Communicating in a variety of ways will enable you to reach your goals of parent and community involvement. Fullan writes about the power of three: teachers, parents and students working together. Involving parents is an unleashed force to school improvement that we must tap.

Successful principals share leadership as they reach out to their parents and community and work hard to expand the professional capacity of the teachers to develop a coherent professional community. Effective leaders are energy creators, creating harmony, forging consensus, setting high standards, and developing a "try this" future orientation. They are forever hopeful and cause everyone in the school's community to share this hope. See skills 2.1, 2.3 and 2.5 for more ideas on parent and community involvement.

Skill 1.3 Implement strategies to ensure the development of collegial relationships and effective collaboration.

“Quality teaching requires strong professional learning communities. Collegial interchange, not isolation, must become the norm for teachers. Communities of learning can no longer be considered utopian; they must become the building blocks that establish a new foundation for America’s school.”

--National Commission on Teaching, 2003, p. 17

Teaching quality and levels of learning will both improve when a simple, powerful structure is used. It starts with a group of teachers who meet regularly as a team to identify essential and valued student learning, develop common formative assessments, analyze current levels of achievement, set achievement goals and then share and create lessons to improve upon those levels.

These teams of teachers implement these new lessons, continuously assessing their results and then adjusting their lessons in light of those results. Importantly, there must be an expectation this collaborative effort will produce ongoing improvement--and gains in achievement.

Professional learning communities are schools in which teachers and leaders work together and focus on student learning. All educational change depends on what teachers do and think - it is as simple and complex as that, yet the conditions for teaching appear to have deteriorated. Stress, alienation and the intense nature of the teacher's work, is at an all time high. Newly imposed curriculum standards and accountability demands leave teachers working in isolation and increasingly feeling frustrated and burnt-out. Collegiality provides the best starting point in the process of teacher regeneration. Teaching needs to be seen as a collective rather than an individual enterprise. Successful schools, using the model of Professional Learning Communities, develop the capacity to self-reflect, to examine student performance and act on their own understandings.

What passes for collaboration or collegiality in many schools lacks a focus on achievement results--on short-term, formative assessment--and thus has little impact on the character and quality of teaching. When teachers engage regularly in authentic "joint work" focused on explicit, common learning goals, their collaboration pays off richly in the form of higher quality solutions to instructional problems, increased teacher confidence, and, not surprisingly, remarkable gains in achievement. Discussions about curricular issues or popular strategies can feel good but go nowhere. Principals must set aside the time for groups of teachers to meet regularly to share, refine and assess the impact of lessons and strategies to help increasing numbers of students learn at higher levels. By establishing times before, after and during the school day for such collaboration, principals can eliminate isolated practice and make these planning sessions a priority. Sometimes, substitute teachers can be used to give teachers additional planning time. Principals should join these groups, not as the leader, but as a study partner, assisting in the discussion about what is working and what is not, based on student data analysis.

Skill 1.4 Respond appropriately to diverse needs in shaping the campus culture.

Education is both a public and a private good because it enhances the individual as it brings important benefits to society (Swanson and King 1997). At an individual level, education provides the ability to enjoy a higher standard of living by earning more money and living a better quality of life, thus, making a contribution into the economy. Education supports the production of a skilled workforce for the efficient functioning of a society that is stimulated by economic growth and development.

Schools operate in an Open System Model where external influences impact the effectiveness of the school-based administration and leadership. External influences provide input into the system of schooling in the form of people, policies, values, laws, technology, and other material resources. This input directly or indirectly affects not only school business decisions such as finance and purchasing, but also affects other functions of school operation such as the curriculum, pupil services, and the like.

It does not matter how efficient and knowledgeable the school-based administrator might be in the endeavors of managing the school if there is a lack of clear understanding of the community power structures, its strengths, and its effects on the operation of the school. Nudge, Anthony and Gayles (1996) suggest that understanding how power is distributed both internally and externally, as well as understanding the political nature of organizations, are two crucial components to better understand the actions or inactions of organizations. To better understand the political nature of the school organization, administrators must clearly understand the difference between authority and power. Legal-rational organizations base their authority on formal policies and vests authority of command in specific individuals. Power, on the other hand, is the capacity to control or influence the behaviors *of* others (Hansen, 1996).

School administrators must be aware of the various dimensions of educational politics in school districts; among these politics of the community, politics of the state and the federal government, politics of the profession, politics of the local board of education, and politics of the bureaucracy (Kimbrough and Nunnery 1988). Perhaps the most important politics for school-based administrators are the politics of the community and its power structure, as well as identifying methods to analyze these structures and develop a plan to work with these groups.

Additionally, practicing administrators must understand the politics involved in the process of educational policy development at the state and district levels.

The school organizational structure is greatly affected by existing conditions in the local community such as customs, traditions, and value systems. These conditions affect the power that is exercised on the formal and informal decision making process at the school district and school building levels. The biggest challenge is to identify the main power brokers in the community and learn how to work with them.

Understanding the politics involved in the process of educational policy development at the state and district levels should be a concern for school administrators. The increase in government funding for education has paralleled the interest of educators in the nature of laws being considered or passed and policy development at the federal, state and local levels. Mandates and policies have direct implication for school level implementation of programs to meet the needs of children, especially when the level of funding is incongruent with the requirements of the law. State politicians constantly struggle to reduce federal involvement in the control over programs and return more control to state government, yet at times losing sight of the fact that the goal of the federal government's participation *is constitutionally one of* equalizing funding to provide an equal education for all children.

School administration has evolved into an inclusive and cooperative endeavor with a structure that endorses a participatory model to include not only administrators and teachers, but also parents, business partners, and other interested citizens in the community. Therefore, the planning process must be ongoing and systematic to allow time for the development of unity of purpose, methodology, and desirable outcome.

Planning must be continuous at both the district levels, as well as the school building level, even though the process used at one level may overlap with the other. Planning methodologies and applications at both the macro and micro planning levels may also overlap.

The rationale approach to planning follows a very logical sequence to accomplish organizational goals. It begins with setting goals, which includes articulating the mission of the organization and clarifying specific goals to be attained. A plan of action that is long-term in nature and inclusive of general projections, along with the short-term plan with the details to carry out the actions deemed necessary. The action plan follows as the implementation tool for both the short-term and the long-term plans. The evaluation process provides feedback for improvement and the process is repeated, thereafter. While very useful to school administrators, the rational approach provides only general principles that are applicable to many areas of planning.

The evaluation component that is built into the process not only assesses the effectiveness of the goal, but it also measures the level of goal attainment over specific periods of time.

Skill 1.5 Use various types of information (e.g., demographic data, campus climate inventory results, student achievement data, emerging issues affecting education) to develop a campus vision and create a plan for implementing the vision.

All leaders must have the capacity to plan. The ability to plan is an essential skill in today's high pressure and ever-changing school environment. It serves the very practical function of assisting administrators to organize their work and to project solutions to problems. Making a determination about what to plan for precedes the activity of planning.

Schools need to plan the curriculum, to plan for students, and to plan for teachers. Planning needs emerge from problems in the environment that are identified and defined. Planning is attached to goals and objectives that are to be achieved. Who participates in the planning process is also crucial to receiving a quality and dynamic plan for implementation.

The essential foundation of planning begins with the identification of a need—a measurable discrepancy between what currently exists and a desired outcome. Planning is an important tool administrators can use to cope with changes in the environment. There is a way of decision making wherein the decision-maker acts before thinking. Planning, however, is a commitment to think before acting, which prevents administrators from potentially being embroiled in a set of negative consequences. Planning can be defined as a conceptualization of activities to reach an objective. Planning has anticipated and unanticipated consequences. Planning, like decision making, often occurs in the absence of all the necessary information. In fact, the current drive for “strategic planning” has many critics who argue that too much attention on planning blinds school personnel from actually accomplishing their plans. However, no planning is worse than poor planning.

Plans develop from the process of planning and entail an agreement on long term and short term goals that move the school from where it is to where stakeholders want it to be (Kaiser, 1996). Schools need to have a strategic plan that details what the school wants to accomplish over a period of time. Planning in schools is based on student enrollments, staffing projections, curriculum needs, and the vision established by stakeholders.

Administrators engage in the planning process as a means of accomplishing desired objectives and accommodating future events which can impact the school positively or negatively. Schools, being open systems, are dependent on their external environments and are subject to the uncertainties that exist in that environment. As part of planning, administrators can identify both potential support to accomplish school goals and elements that can have a negative influence on the functioning of the school.

Skill 1.6 Use strategies for involving all stakeholders in planning processes to enable the collaborative development of a shared campus vision focused on teaching and learning.

Planning has long been recognized as a key factor in getting the work of a school done. Mandates from superiors, desires of subordinates and others in the learning community, and a vision are but a few of the reasons that a school principal realizes the importance of planning. To develop a plan, the principal must organize all who will be involved in the planning process.

In designing a plan, the school leader must meet established deadlines, develop a flow of activities, identify resource allocations, and ascertain evaluation strategies. The deadlines must be for today or for the future. Tasks to be accomplished must be prioritized, persons identified who will accomplish each. The principal plans for such tasks as student achievement, accreditation, co-curricular activities, master schedule, parent organizations, student trips, and school special events. Managerial competencies are required to get each of these tasks accomplished.

Prior to developing a plan, the principal has to identify what needs to be done and the procedures necessary to accomplish the tasks. Early involvement of participants will facilitate accomplishing tasks. The tasks may involve changing an existing situation or creating a new one to benefit the students.

Planning includes the flexibility to reorder plans as unexpected activities occur to enable the school to reach its goals. The principal is also able to see when and from whom help is needed to achieve the goals in a timely manner. Effective communication allows the principal to act in proactive ways to accomplish tasks identified in plans.

Schools never have enough resources to meet all the demands placed upon them. Technology is expensive and places tremendous demands on the budget. The proactive principal understands this and makes a plan to maximize available resources. These resources include relocation, renovation, new construction, and allocation of such resources as computer quantity and location, audio-visual equipment quantity and quality, media resources and space, meeting rooms, teacher and staff offices, multi-purpose rooms, classrooms, laboratories, cafeterias, playgrounds, physical education indoor and outdoor space, and auxiliary spaces.

Some problems within a school are related to the larger community and require knowledge beyond the school. For example, if drugs are allegedly being sold a few blocks from a school and students are supposedly making purchases during the lunch hour, all information should be obtained and the community should be involved. Community involvement is critical in making a decision on how to handle this problem.

Prior to reaching a decision, the principal must gather as much information as possible from the community and the school. All potential data sources must be identified and contacted. During the data gathering process, analysis of information and the need for additional sources must be explored. This process must be systematic and include such information as the source(s) of the original information, potential data sources, ways to obtain the data, means to analyze the data, who to involve and when, and how to make the decision to create the fairest and best solution(s).

Skill 1.7 Facilitate the collaborative development of a plan that clearly articulates objectives and strategies for implementing a campus vision.

When principals commit to become school administrators, they have a passionate notion about how schools should work. This “vision” is often a collection of thoughts principals have developed during their teaching career or an idea that came from research or reading. The campus vision must be personalized to the campus and should include input from all stakeholders (staff, parents, community) of the individual school with the principal leading the discussion. A vision is a clear statement of the guarantee given to all students attending a certain school. Embedded in a vision is the idea of the ability to see something that is not readily apparent, or that doesn’t yet exist. A school’s vision should be a picture of the possibilities, reaching into a better future that will benefit the school’s children.

How does one gather input about the school’s vision? Every conversation with parents and other stakeholders yields information about what is important for their children. The school’s history, and past successes and failures, are important considerations. Looking at the data found in the school’s AEIS (Academic Excellence Indicator System) report will yield the facts needed to steer the stakeholders toward new areas of improvement and focus. Showing a comparison of the school’s results compared to statewide results will also be a conversation starter for areas of celebration or areas to target for improvement. The improvement targets are then delineated in the annual Campus Improvement Plan (CIP) or School Improvement Plan (SIP) document. The CIP lists the school’s goals along with activities to accomplish the goals, a timeline for completion and the personnel assigned to monitor goal completion.