

**DOMAIN I.**

**SCHOOL COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP**

**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 now are 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 a 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 in which many students are struggling, that principal needs to fast track the change by pushing hard on standards, delivering 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.

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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 in which you work. Ultimately no amount of outside motivation can specify the best solutions for a particular situation. Principals who help their schools 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.

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 that “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 children 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 may want the principal to replicate their school experiences. But many parents have memories of their own schooling that are less 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. Parental involvement is a force for school improvement that we must tap.

Successful principals share leadership as they reach out to their parents and community, and they work hard 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 that 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—yet the conditions for teaching appear to have deteriorated. Stress, alienation, and the intense nature of the teacher’s work are 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 to 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 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 to 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, in which 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 other functions of school operation, such as the curriculum and pupil services.

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's 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 and 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 understand the difference between authority and power. Legal-rational organizations base their authority on formal policies and vest authority of command in specific individuals. Power, in contrast, 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—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. 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.

Additionally, practicing administrators must understand the politics involved in the process of educational policy development at the state and district levels. 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 implications 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 programs and return more control to state government, at times losing sight of the fact that the goal of the federal government's participation is the constitutional mandate 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 and the school building levels, even though the process used at one level may overlap with the other.

The rational approach to planning follows a 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. The action plan is the implementation tool, and it must have two components: a long-term plan that includes general projections and a short-term plan that includes the details to carry out the actions deemed necessary. The evaluation process provides feedback for improvement. After evaluation, the process is repeated. Although 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 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 helps

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administrators organize their work and project solutions to problems. Determining 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. Who participates in the planning process is crucial to receiving a quality and dynamic plan for implementation.

Planning begins with the identification of a need—a measurable discrepancy between what currently exists and a desired outcome. It is common for a decision-maker to act before thinking. Planning is a commitment to think before acting. This prevents administrators from 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 without all the necessary information. Critics of the current drive for “strategic planning” argue that too much attention on planning blinds school personnel from 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.

Administrators engage in the planning process as a means of accomplishing desired objectives and accommodating future events that can impact the school positively or negatively. Schools, being open systems, are dependent on their external environment 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.

Principals know that student achievement data offers invaluable support for making good decisions about instruction. But how that data are used is critical. To help all students achieve, teachers need to systematically and routinely use data to guide instructional decisions and meet students’ learning needs. To gain a deeper understanding of students’ learning needs, teachers need to collect data from multiple sources, such as annual state assessments, interim district and school assessments, classroom performance, and other relevant sources.

A district-wide data system allows teachers to aggregate data by classroom, content area, or assignment type to identify patterns in performance. While developing a written plan that ties data use to a school’s goals, a data team should ensure that goals are attainable, measurable, and relevant. The written plan needs to be actionable and include critical elements such as specific data

use activities, staff roles and responsibilities, and timelines. This could be a component incorporated into the school's strategic plan for student achievement or any other existing plans for various funding sources such as Title I, literacy, and so on.

**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 is a key factor in getting the work of a school done. Mandates from superiors, desires of subordinates or others in the learning community, and the school's vision are a few of the reasons that planning is critical. In designing a plan, the school leader must establish deadlines, develop a flow of activities, identify resource allocations, and ascertain evaluation strategies. Tasks to be accomplished must be prioritized, and persons who will accomplish each must be identified. 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. Prior to reaching a decision, the principal must gather as much information as possible from the community and the school. The principal must identify and contact all potential data sources. During the data-gathering process, the principal must analyze information and consider additional sources. This process must be systematic and include 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).

Short-range planning includes the flexibility to reorder long-range 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, multipurpose 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 allegedly are being sold a few blocks from a school and students supposedly are 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.

**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 often is 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, including its past successes and failures, is an important consideration. The data found in the school's AEIS (Academic Excellence Indicator System) report can steer the stakeholders toward new areas of improvement and focus. Showing a comparison of the school's results to statewide results also will 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.

**Skill 1.8      Align financial, human, and material resources to support implementation of a campus vision.**

The principal is the gatekeeper of a school's resources, and resources are more than monetary. Resources include the district budget; student activity funds; Title I and other grant monies; the human resources of parents, staff and volunteers; and the material resources of the school building.

It has been said that everyone in a school is paying attention to what the principal is paying attention to. A principal must make sure that his or her words and actions match and that the vision is the criteria used to identify essentials and priorities. Principals and teachers have limited time and energy. Every task undertaken requires asking, "Will this get me and my staff closer to our vision of what we want to accomplish for children?"

Every financial expenditure requires the signature and approval of the principal. Rather than making the spending decisions based on whim or favoritism, the principal should always be guided by the campus improvement plan and the Campus Performance Objective Council (CPOC). The CPOC is also known as the campus leadership team. As required by Texas Administrative Code, the CPOC will contain members representing the school staff, the parents, and the school community. For example, if funds are requested for an autism conference, but there are no school goals or student needs in this area, then this request should not be funded. However, if the school goals include literacy development, then a request for funding for additional library books may be approved.

The principal also controls the human resources, or the staffing of the school. School staffing models vary from district to district, but all principals have some control of how many teachers and support staff are hired. Principals may make decisions about job descriptions, duties, and assigned responsibilities, as well as appraisal and development of the school staff. It is a waste of human resources to have ineffective staff members continue on the school payroll, so principals should carefully document and remove employees who do not contribute to the school goals. When a need for additional support surfaces, the principal must take an overall look at how staff is being used and reallocate the human resources to meet the need. For example, when teachers are absent and there are not enough substitute teachers to cover the classes, the principal must decide how to manage the classes by combining students or by reassigning office staff or support staff to fill this need.

Resources are always limited, and conflict can occur when stakeholders are denied their requests for spending. Involving the school leadership team in these decisions and keeping the group focused on student achievement will help the principal maintain integrity and will keep the focus on the school vision.