Principal Advisory Council
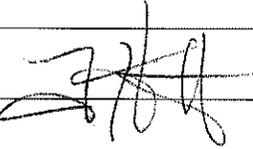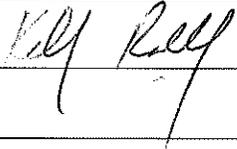**December 15, 2014**
8:30-11:30
Agenda

1. Welcome (5 min.)

2. Learning: (1.5 hrs.)

   a. Learning Forward: The Principal's Story:
      i. Unit 1: Shaping a vision of academic success for all students
         1. http://goo.gl/LS95j4

3. Making Connections to PAC vision

   Our vision is to <u>stimulate learning</u> that leads to <u>impactful leadership</u> reflected in our <u>everyday practices</u>.
   - <u>Stimulate learning</u>: Make the next step once learning has taken place, make you excited, making it relevant
   - <u>Impactful leadership</u>: attendance in learning, one with everyday practices, what's going to live on once a principal leaves, building a culture of collaboration, known for making a difference (sts. , parents, staff), supported in the guidance, visibility, check and connect
   - <u>Everyday practices</u>: Embedded in job/role

4. Debrief on November 3rd PLP session (45 min.)
   a. Analyze feedback
   b. Link to drive documents: http://goo.gl/VTYrGb

5. Planning for large group (30 min.)
   a. January 13th:
      i. Morning session: Leading School Change
      ii. Afternoon session: Teacher Leadership

6. Communication and moving forward (10 min.)

PRINCIPAL ADVISORY COUNCIL - 12/5/2014

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WIEBENGA, CHUCK	CAMANCHE	HIGH SCHOOL	

5 PIVOTAL PRACTICES THAT SHAPE INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

THE EFFECTIVE PRINCIPAL

By Pamela Mendels

When most people hear the word "principal," they think of the noun meaning the chief, the top executive, the head of all others, the person who controls the levers. Not so Dewey Hensley, himself a former principal and today an assistant commissioner in Kentucky's Department of Education. Hensley likes to remind people that when it was first used in connection with school leadership in the 1800s, the word "principal" was an adjective in front of another word, "teacher" (Pierce, 1935, p. 11). The "principal teacher," he says, was a kind of first among equals, an instructor who assumed some administrative tasks as schools began to grow beyond the one-room buildings of yore. The original principal, Hensley stresses, was, like the other teachers in the school, concerned with instruction above all.

Principals in the 21st century, he says, could do worse than keep this 19th-century definition in mind as they face the challenges of turning around failing schools and work to live up to the ideals embodied in a more contemporary term, "instructional leader." Today's best principals, Hensley says, "know what good and effective instruction looks like so they can provide feedback to guide teachers."

This view of the principalship — that it should center on instruction, not building management or other administrative matters — is one that has gained currency in recent years. So has the idea that if instruction is the heart of their job, principals have a vital role to play in school improvement. Consider a 2010 survey of school and district administrators, policy advisers, and others in the education world. They named "principal leadership" as second only to teacher quality when they were asked to rank in importance 21 education issues, ranging from special education and English language learning to school violence and reducing the dropout rate (Simkin, Charner, & Suss, 2010, pp. 9-10).

A major reason for the attention being paid to principals is the emergence of research that has found an empirical link between school leadership and student achievement. A seminal 2004 study, *How Leadership In-*

fluences Student Learning, asserted that leadership was the second most important school-based factor in children's academic achievement and noted that there were few, if any, cases of troubled schools turning around without effective leaders (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). In 2010, the authors of that study, a team of researchers from the University of Minnesota and the University of Toronto, published a detailed sequel to probe school leadership in depth. They reaffirmed their earlier conclusion, declaring that: "In developing a starting point for this six-year study, we claimed, based on a preliminary review of research, that leadership is second only to classroom instruction as an influence on student learning. After six additional years of research, we are even more confident about this claim" (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010, p. 9). And they found, further, that although school leadership does not make its impact directly, its indirect workings have a statistically significant effect on student achievement (Louis et al., 2010, p. 37).

What exactly is it that effective principals do that ripples through classrooms and boosts learning, especially in failing schools? Since 2000, The Wallace Foundation, which has supported projects to promote education leadership in 24 states and published 70 reports on the subject (including the Minnesota/Toronto research), has been trying to answer that question. A recently published Wallace Perspective report that takes a look back at the foundation's research and field experiences finds that five practices in particular seem central to effective school leadership (The Wallace Foundation, 2012):

1. Shaping a vision of academic success for all students, one based on high standards;
2. Creating a climate hospitable to education in order that safety, a cooperative spirit, and other foundations of fruitful interaction prevail;
3. Cultivating leadership in others so that teachers and other adults assume their part in realizing the school vision;
4. Improving instruction to enable teachers to teach at their best and students to learn at their utmost; and
5. Managing people, data and processes to foster school improvement.

When principals put each of these elements in place — and in harmony — principals stand a fighting chance of making a real difference for students.

SHAPING A VISION

1 Effective leadership begins with the development of a schoolwide vision of commitment to high standards and the success of all students. The principal helps to spell out that vision and get all others on board with it. "The research literature over the last quarter-century has consistently supported the notion that having high expectations for all, including clear and public standards, is one key to closing the achievement gap between advantaged and less advantaged students and for raising the overall achievement of all students," write education leadership researchers at Vanderbilt University (Porter et al., 2008, p. 13).

The Minnesota/Toronto team found that principals rated highly by teachers for having created a good instructional climate or taken sound instructional actions had been able to nurture a strong vision that all students can learn. "Clearly, what gets the highly rated principals out of bed each morning is what keeps them awake at night: They have a vision and believe that all students can achieve at high levels," the researchers say. "… They emphasize the value of research-based strategies. They speak about the amount of time that is invested in developing the school's vision, gathering research information, and then applying it to the local setting." In one passage, the researchers quote a teacher and the principal at a school where the vision has been securely planted: " 'My principal is very firm in what she believes,' " the teacher tells the researchers. For her part, the principal makes clear that the vision is "nonnegotiable," as the researchers put it, commenting that her expectations are high and the teachers know that. " 'I simply put it out there: We've got to kick it up a notch,' " the principal says (Louis et al., 2010, p. 84).

CREATING A CLIMATE HOSPITABLE TO EDUCATION

2 To be sure, effective principals shape schools buildings characterized by the basics — safety and orderliness — but they also see to it that schools create an atmosphere in which students feel supported and responded to. For teachers, too, principals set a tone. The feel is nonbureaucratic, and teachers form part of a professional community that is "deeply rooted in the academic and social learning goals of the schools" (Goldring, Porter, Murphy, Elliott, & Cravens, 2007, pp. 7-8). Principals ensure that teachers do not work in isolation from one another, but work collaboratively, giving each other help and guidance to improve instructional practices (Louis et al., 2010, p. 50).

Effective principals work hard at building such school communities, found University of Washington researchers in an examination of leadership in urban schools. "Alongside their efforts to prioritize collaboration and address trust in the building, the principals, aided by other admin-

istrative staff, made improvement of the work culture a central target of their efforts to lead a learning improvement agenda," the researchers found. "Some had arrived at their job feeling that they needed to change a toxic culture at the school to do what they needed to do. Other spoke of 'building a culture,' 'moving toward a culture,' or 'leading a culture of change.' "

The University of Washington researchers went on to list the key elements of a climate hospitable to learning: "a sense of student and staff safety; respect for all members of the school community, without regard to the professional status or position; an upbeat, welcoming, solution-oriented, no-blame, professional environment; an effort to invite and involve staff in various schoolwide functions; and a parallel outreach to students that engaged and involved them in a variety of activities" (Portin et al., 2009, p. 59).

CULTIVATING LEADERSHIP IN OTHERS

3 Effective principals know they cannot go it alone. They are not the lonely-at-the-top, hero-principal who has become a fixture of popular culture. Instead, they make good use of all the skills and knowledge on the faculty and among others, encouraging the many capable adults who make up a school community to step into leadership roles and responsibilities.

The more open a principal is to spreading leadership around, the better it is for student learning, the Minnesota/Toronto researchers found. Indeed, a particularly notable finding of their study is that effective leadership from a variety of sources — principals, teachers, staff teams and others — is associated with better student performance on math and reading tests. "Compared with lower-achieving schools, higher-achieving schools provided all stakeholders with greater influence on decisions," the report says. It then goes on to explore why, suggesting that when it comes to leadership, the adage about two (or more) heads being better than one applies. "The higher performance of these schools might be explained as a consequence of the greater access they have to collective knowledge and wisdom embedded within their communities," the researchers say (Louis et al., 2010, p. 35).

What's more, leadership appears not to be a zero sum game. The researchers found that principals "do not lose influence as others gain influence" (Louis et al., 2010, p. 19).

IMPROVING INSTRUCTION

4 Effective leaders focus laser-like on the quality of instruction in their schools. As the Wallace Perspective notes, "They emphasize research-based strategies to improve teaching and learning and initiate discussions about instructional approaches, both in teams and with individual teachers. They pursue these strategies despite the preference of many teachers to be left alone" (The Wallace Foundation, 2012).

Principals spend time in classrooms to evaluate instruction or, especially in the case of secondary schools where they can't reasonably be expected to be experts in all academic disciplines, they ensure that someone who is qualified does so. They make close observations of what's working and what isn't. And they make sure to discuss what they have found with teachers.

The Minnesota/Toronto study contrasted its high-scoring principals with their low-scoring counterparts.

The first group made frequent, short, and often spontaneous classroom visits, which they quickly followed up with feedback to the teacher.

Visits by the second group tended to be scheduled and not for instructional observation, but "most damaging," the researchers write, is that the low-scoring principals failed to provide their teachers with feedback.

In the cause of improving instruction, effective principals take advantage of the collaborative culture they work to create in their schools, the University of Washington researchers found, noting that the school leaders they observed "consistently expressed" the desire to see teachers working, teaching, and helping one another. "To create opportunities for teacher collaboration and learning, supervisory leaders across school sites turned to the school schedule to create the time and endorsement for this kind of work to occur," the researchers found. "Some principals moved to a block schedule, others gave up administrative meeting time to create more planning time for teachers, while others used the master schedule as a tool to create opportunities and accommodate for various teacher professional development activities, such as 'lab sites,' peer observations, grade-level meetings, and professional development sessions" (Portin et al., 2009, p. 59).

MANAGING PEOPLE, DATA, AND PROCESSES

5 Effective leaders hire well and know how to retain the high performers. They also know how to give their teachers the backing they need to thrive. "Indeed," writes Stanford University education policy analyst Linda Darling-Hammond, "the number one reason for teachers' decisions about whether to stay in a school is the quality of administrative support — and it is the leader who must develop this organization" (Darling-Hammond, 2007, p. 17).

At a time when federal and state accountability mandates have made data analysis a fact of school life, effective principals also know how to make the best use of data, learning to ask useful questions of it and taking advantage of it for collaborative inquiry among teachers and helpful feedback to students (Portin et al., 2009).

Strong principals also know how to go about their jobs systematically. The Vanderbilt researchers, who have developed a tool known as VAL-ED for assessing principals, have pinpointed six key steps that school leaders follow in carrying out their central responsibilities: planning, implementing, sup-

porting, advocating, communicating, and monitoring (Porter et al., 2008, p. 15).

BETTER LEADERSHIP ON THE POLICY AGENDA

Knowing what constitutes good school leadership is one thing. Putting it into effect is another. The good news is that a deeper understanding of what strong instructional leadership looks like is emerging at the same time that policymakers are beginning to take leadership seriously. Once an issue at the margins of school reform, boosting school leadership has climbed high on the policy to-do list. One need look no farther for evidence than the most recent in a series of yearly reports on leadership legislative initiatives. It identifies 23 states that, as a group, enacted 42 laws regarding school leadership in the 2010 legislative session alone. "The emphasis on effective school leadership continues to inform national and state discussions about educator effectiveness and school turnaround," the report says, noting that, in addition to the state activity, the federal government has taken a keen interest in leadership through competitive grant programs including Race to the Top (Shelton, 2011, p. 2).

To take advantage of this interest, educators and policymakers at all levels would do well to remember that the crux of the principal's job today is not, as it was in the recent past, to sit at the apex and attend to administrative tasks, but to work collaboratively and unleash potential.

Whether forming a vision for a school or encouraging teachers to help one another burnish their classroom skills, the effective principal is a guide along the path to better instruction. "An instructional leader is someone who first and foremost realizes that the strategies and instructional practices teachers use are the primary mover of student achievement," says Hensley, who was named to head up a new state school turnaround effort in Kentucky after his own success as a principal at a once-failing Louisville elementary school. "These leaders guide their teachers to recognize how significant what they do is to academic performance."

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Big ideas chart

Use this chart to enter notes while viewing the film clip.

What big ideas are you taking away?

What would you do differently?

What questions emerge for you?

What are implications for you as an aspiring school leader?

Excerpt

The School Principal as Leader: Guiding Schools to Better Teaching and Learning (The Wallace Foundation, 2013), 7–8.
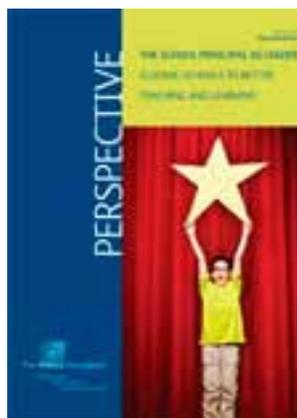
Although they say it in different ways, researchers who have examined education leadership agree that effective principals are responsible for establishing a schoolwide vision of commitment to high standards and the success of all students.

Newcomers to the education discussion might find this puzzling: Hasn't concern with the academic achievement of every student always topped principals' agendas? The short answer is, no. For years public school principals were seen as school managers[1], and as recently as two decades ago, high standards were thought to be the province of the college bound. "Success" could be defined as entry-level manufacturing work for students who had followed a "general track," and low-skilled employment for dropouts. Only in the last few decades has the emphasis shifted to academic expectations for all.

This change comes in part as a response to twin realizations: Career success in a global economy depends on a strong education; for all segments of U.S. society to be able to compete fairly, the yawning gap in academic achievement between disadvantaged and advantaged students needs to narrow. In a school, closing the gap begins with spelling out "high standards and rigorous learning goals," Vanderbilt University researchers assert with underlined emphasis. Specifically, they say, "The research literature over the last quarter century has consistently supported the notion that having high expectations for all, including clear and public standards, is one key to closing the achievement gap between advantaged and less advantaged students and for raising the overall achievement of all students."[2]

An effective principal also makes sure that the notion of academic success for all gets picked up by the faculty and underpins what researchers at the University of Washington describe as a schoolwide learning improvement agenda that focuses on goals for student progress.[3] One middle school teacher described what adopting the vision meant for her. "My expectations have increased every year," she told

1. Karen Seashore Louis, Kenneth Leithwood, Kyla L. Wahlstrom and Stephen E. Anderson, *Learning From Leadership: Investigating the Links to Improved Student Learning: Final Report of Research Findings,* University of Minnesota and University of Toronto, 2010, 78.
2. Andrew C. Porter, Joseph Murphy, Ellen Goldring, Stephen N. Elliott, Morgan S. Polikoff and Henry May, Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education: Technical Manual, Version 1.0, Vanderbilt University, 2008, 13.
3. Michael S. Knapp, Michael A. Copland, Meredith I. Honig, Margaret L. Plecki, and Bradley S. Portin, *Learning-focused Leadership and Leadership Support: Meaning and Practice in Urban Systems,* University of Washington, 2010, 2.

the researchers. "I've learned that as long as you support them, there is really nothing [the students] can't do."[4] So, developing a shared vision around standards, and success for all students is an essential elements of school leadership. As the Cheshire cat pointed out to Alice, if you don't know where you're going, any road will lead you there.

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4. Bradley S. Portin, Michael S. Knapp, Scott Dareff, Sue Feldman, Felice A. Russell, Catherine Samuelson and Theresa Ling Yeh, *Leadership for Learning Improvement in Urban Schools,* University of Washington, 2009, 55.

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Worksheet

1. What does it mean for principals to shape a vision of academic success for all students?

2. What examples or results of effectively shaping a vision can you share from your own experience?

Unit 1, Activity 1: Discover personal assumptions

Purpose	To assess your own assumptions and actions about the practice of shaping a vision; discuss how personal attitudes and experiences relate to the principal's actions, behaviors, and choices observed in the film clip; determine implications of those assumptions for yourself and others.
Time	75 minutes
Required roles	Participants; facilitator

Personal assumptions, actions, and practices   Approximate time: 20 minutes

Independently, read each assumption, and use codes to indicate your level of agreement with each statement. For each assumption, then identify potential implications for the role of school principal. Upon completion, share your thoughts and answer questions below in small groups.

* = Strongly Agree   **?** = Uncertain   **!** = Strongly Disagree
+ = Somewhat Agree   **-** = Somewhat Disagree

Assumptions	Code	Implications for principals
1. Every student deserves effective teaching every day.		
2. The capacity of educators to invent solutions to educational problems is a powerful untapped resource.		
3. A school's vision is essential to achieving school goals for students.		
4. The success of educators' daily work depends on effective professional learning.		
5. Shared responsibility and collaborative learning combine to improve student results.		
6. School is the center of change.		
7. Vision that aligns school system, school, and individual goals exponentially increases results for educators and students.		
8. Effective professional learning requires collaboration among educators.		

Group discussion

The facilitator will organize small groups and guide them through a round-robin session to share thoughts about ratings and respond to each of the questions below.

1. Review your responses in the chart on page 1. Note the assumption below with which you agree most strongly and the assumption with which you most strongly disagree. Share why you agree and why you disagree.

2. Next, review your responses to "Implications" in the chart on page 1. Make note of the implications for the assumptions you just highlighted. Discuss those implications within your small group.

I most strongly **agree** with the following assumption:

Why I agree:

Implications:

I most strongly **disagree** with the following assumption:

Why I disagree:

Implications:

3. Finally, below write how you, as a principal, will model behaviors for others as you act on these assumptions. Discuss each within your small group.

Discussion about the film clip

Approximate time: 25 minutes

After you have identified your own assumptions, aspirations, actions, and practices, look again at those in the film clip, "Shaping a Vision of Academic Success for All Students."

In small groups, share thoughts, reactions, and interpretations using questions below to guide discussions. Be prepared to debrief salient points discussed with the larger group.

1. How do visionary leaders challenge the status quo?

2. Tresa is a novice principal and Kerry is a veteran. How might different levels of experience affect principals' abilities to enact change within their schools?

Individual reflection

Approximate time: 5 minutes

Following the larger group debrief, independently respond to the following reflection questions.

1. In preparing to serve as a school principal, think about the complexities of shaping a vision. Using what you learned from reading about and observing Tresa and Kerry, how will you approach shaping a vision for academic success?

2. What would you do similarly? Differently?

THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ASSOCIATION

Unit 1, Activity 4: **Take action**

Purpose	To apply the research-based ideas by projecting potential strategies and actions.
Time	40 minutes
Required roles	Participants; facilitator

Observable behaviors   Approximate time: 20 minutes

With a partner, complete the chart below. You may begin by drawing on your responses to the role-playing question in "Unit 1, Activity 3: Link research with practice."

In the first column, identify observable behaviors a principal would enact when shaping a vision. Then, identify actions by staff that are directly associated with principal behaviors. Share how each role's practices are unique yet similar.

What is the principal doing?	What is the staff doing?

Alignment review

Approximate time: 10 minutes

Use the lists generated in the previous exercise on page 1, "Observable behaviors," to determine how closely your thinking aligns with assumptions below. During the discussion, with the facilitator's guidance, be prepared to share agreements, disagreements, and additions with the larger group.

- Setting clear, rigorous learning expectations for all students is crucial to closing the achievement gap between advantaged and less-advantaged students, and for raising achievement overall.

- Effective leadership begins with the development of a schoolwide vision of commitment to high standards and the success of all students.

- The principal helps to spell out that vision and get all others on board with it.

- Leadership only succeeds if the leader brings other people along into the same vision, and they are all able to work together and trust one another.

Reflection before taking action

Approximate time: 10 minutes

How are principal and staff behaviors individually and collectively important? How will these behaviors influence your work and learning?