Beyond Principal Supervision, Building a System of Support for Principal Success

The Center for Educational Leadership Team

Dr. Stephen Fink
Max Silverman

Our Mission
The Center for Educational Leadership (CEL) is a nonprofit service arm of the University of Washington College of Education dedicated to eliminating the achievement gap that continues to divide our nation’s children along the lines of race, class, language and disability.
Equity Is a Key Principle of Our Work

- Equal Outcomes
- Fairness
- Access and Support
- Respect for Differences
- Achievement of Every Student

Foundational Ideas

1. If students are not learning they are not being afforded powerful learning opportunities.
2. Teaching is a highly complex and sophisticated endeavor.
3. Practice of sophisticated endeavors only improves when it is open for public scrutiny.
4. Improving practice in a culture of public scrutiny requires reciprocal accountability.
5. Reciprocal accountability implies a particular kind of leadership to improve teaching and learning.
6. Leaders cannot lead what they don’t know.

Two-Part Equation

- Common language for high-quality instruction
- Knowing how to lead for that

Instructional Anatomy + Instructional Leadership = Instructional Effectiveness
The Human Capital Development Challenge

1) Developing understanding and expertise in instructional anatomy
2) Developing understanding and expertise in instructional leadership

Instructional Anatomy

Our 5D™ instructional framework lays out a vision for high-quality teaching and aligns the work of instructional improvement across the school system. The framework organizes and defines the ideal characteristics of classroom instruction into five dimensions:

- Purpose
- Student Engagement
- Assessment for Student Learning
- Classroom Environment and Culture
- Curriculum and Pedagogy
The Human Capital Development Challenge

1) Developing understanding and expertise in instructional anatomy

2) Developing understanding and expertise in instructional leadership

Instructional Leadership

Our 4D™ instructional leadership framework identifies a vision for principals and other school leaders who want to improve instructional practice. The framework is organized into four dimensions:

1. VISION, MISSION AND LEARNING-FOCUSED CULTURE
2. IMPROVEMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE
3. ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES
4. MANAGEMENT OF SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES
What do we know about the instructional expertise level of school district leaders across the country?
Next Generation Assessment

- In fall of 2015, researchers from Vanderbilt and the University of Washington launched a two-year revalidation study of the 5D Assessment.
- Study is funded by the Department of Education, Institute of Educational Sciences (IES).
- Work done to date has resulted in a makeover of assessment.
- Assessment is now called Measures of Instructional Leadership Expertise (MILE™).

Measurement of Instructional Leadership Expertise (MILE) Assessment

- Empirical and experiential research effort led to the development of a new rubric framework.
- The rubric includes:
  - five general dimensions of what expert observers of instruction pay attention to in their observations.
  - two proficiency areas of providing feedback and professional development.
  - one cross-cutting dimension of leading with inquiry.
- Rubric differentiates novice from expert practice along each area and dimension.

MILE Assessment Process

- Participants watch a video of classroom instruction and write responses answering:
  - What did you notice – and wonder – about teaching and learning in this classroom?
  - What specific feedback would you give the teacher to help him/her take productive next steps in improving instruction? And why?
  - What plan for professional development and support would you suggest for this teacher based on what you observed? That is what does the teacher need to learn, and how would you get him/her there?
- Responses are scored by two trained raters (highly experienced instructional leaders) using research-based rubric.
- There is an inter-rater reliability at 85% or higher among our scorers.
Performance Level Descriptors

1. **Novice**: characterized by some misconceptions; generalities; often corrects/tells judges; focuses exclusively on teacher behaviors and not student behaviors; focuses on superficial details; less information presented; uses few details from the video to support ideas.

2. **Emerging**: ideas may not be focused; refers to only few teacher/student actions from the video to support ideas; uses jargon of practice not linked to evidence in the video; ideas are not contextualized/situated/connected; typically, moderate amount of information presented.

Performance Level Descriptors

3. **Developing**: leverages details from teacher/student behaviors and interactions to support some ideas; shows some ability to make sense of observations (making connections among student learning, experiences, research, standards); typically extended information provided.

4. **Nearly a master**: situated knowledge; focused; careful and targeted use of detail from teacher/student behaviors and interactions to support ideas; explains use of observations to guide recommendations for feedback/PD; demonstrates content expertise or strategies for addressing content; typically elaborated information provided.

MILE Assessment

Number of participants: 328
- Elementary: 165
- Secondary: 163

Overall Averages by:
- Observation and Analysis
- Feedback
- Professional Development
- Inquiry Stance

Distribution of Scores

Comparison: Cumulative National Average
- 5D assessment (4,357 participants)
- MILE Assessment Observation and Analysis
Overall Average: Inquiry Stance

Levels of Expertise: Observation and Analysis

Levels of Expertise: Feedback
Levels of Expertise: Professional Development

- Nearly a Master: Evidence-based PD: 32, Quality of PD: 60, Content of PD: 55
- Developing: Evidence-based PD: 136, Quality of PD: 60, Content of PD: 17
- Emerging: Evidence-based PD: 44, Quality of PD: 117, Content of PD: 88

1-1.5 = Novice, 1.51-2.5 = Emerging, 2.51-3.5 = Developing, 3.51-4 = Nearly a Master

Levels of Expertise: Inquiry Stance

- Nearly a Master: Inquiry Stance: 12
- Developing: Inquiry Stance: 98
- Emerging: Inquiry Stance: 78
- Novice: Inquiry Stance: 182

1-1.5 = Novice, 1.51-2.5 = Emerging, 2.51-3.5 = Developing, 3.51-4 = Nearly a Master

Comparison: Cumulative National Averages

- Cumulative Average - 5D Assessment
- Cumulative Average - MILE Assessment

1-1.5 = Novice, 1.51-2.5 = Emerging, 2.51-3.5 = Developing, 3.51-4 = Nearly a Master
The Problem for Principal Supervisors

- Too few leaders charged with leading the improvement of instruction have developed sufficient expertise to identify high-quality teaching.
- With limited instructional expertise, school leaders are more likely to have difficulty identifying and envisioning an improvement trajectory for individual teachers.
- With limited instructional expertise, school and district leaders are more likely to have difficulty envisioning effective strategic improvement initiatives aimed at deepening the professional learning of all teachers within a system.

What do Effective Districts do to Support Principals as Instructional Leaders?

Our Experience – Supporting Central Office Leaders

- Supported over 50 school districts:
  - Design
  - Professional Development
  - Coaching
- Gates and Wallace Foundation funded projects:
  - Leading for Effective Teaching Project
  - Central Office Transformation Toolkit
“If you want to leverage improvement in a school system, the most critical role is the principal.”

If the central office does X
Then principals will be able to do Y
Which means teachers will do Z
Which will result in achievement for all students!


Principal Support Framework

Our Principal Support Framework illustrates what it means for district leaders to support principals as instructional leaders. The framework defines three action areas, each with indicators of success:

1. System of Support for Developing Principals as Instructional Leaders
2. Shared Vision of Principals as Instructional Leaders
3. Making It Possible for Principals to Be Instructional Leaders

A Shared Vision of Principals as Instructional Leaders

Action Area 1
Vision Statements
- High-priority practices of instructional leaders drive the day-to-day work of principals.

Guiding Questions
- In what ways do high-priority instructional leadership practices drive principal goal setting and professional development?

What is the primary role of principals in your system?

All Respondents

- Instructional Leader (51%)
- CEO of School Site (51%)
- Depends on Principal (12%)

Selected by 70% of School Leadership and Supervision Respondents

Selected by 52% of Business Services Respondents

Rationale for Action Area 1

Shared vision and understanding of the principal as an instructional leader:
- Clarifies principal expectations and day-to-day work as instructional leaders.
- Becomes the basis for professional learning, assessing and measuring performance.
- Drives the hiring of principal candidates.
Action Area 1: What we are learning

- Evaluation frameworks are insufficient.
- Reach agreement with principals on "POWER STANDARDS" and let them drive:
  - Goal setting and performance improvement efforts.
  - Principal pipeline efforts.
  - Principal selection and hiring process.

What we are learning (cont’d)

- Communication in multiple forms is critical:
  - To the entire central office.
  - Reinforced as much as possible.

System of Support for Developing Principals as Instructional Leaders

Action Area 2
Vision Statements
• Principals receive dedicated and effective support in adopting high-priority instructional leadership practices into their day-to-day work as instructional leaders.

Guiding Questions
• To what extent do principals receive differentiated support focused on their development as instructional leaders?

Rationale for Action Area 2
• Supervision is an insufficient lever to improve practice.
• Principal professional development often outsourced, topical in nature, led by a variety of departments.
• Few intensive and intentional job-embedded opportunities to improve instructional leadership skills.
• Few formal opportunities for principals to collaborate to improve their practice.

Action Area 2 - What We Are Learning
• Starts with the right principal supervisors who possess:
  - Deep understanding of effective instructional practices.
  - Deep understanding of effective leadership practices, especially instructional leadership and human capital management.
  - Adult teaching and coaching skills to help principals learn and develop; for example, working from evidence, working from problems of practice.
• Much more than a “principal supervisor initiative”.
What We Are Learning, continued

• Need for principal learning systems that include:
  – Professional development
  – Coaching
  – Mentoring
  – Principal agency and collaboration

A Strategic Partnership Between the Central Office and Principals

Action Area 3

Vision Statements
• Schools receive differentiated and integrated services rooted in an understanding of the needs of each school.

Guiding Questions
• To what extent can central office staff articulate the connection between their work and supporting principals as instructional leaders?
Rationale for Action Area 3

- Principals need more time for instructional leadership.
- Principals don’t always know what they need from the central office.
- Compliance and monitoring are not the same as a strategic partnership.
- Central office has the potential to add value to schools!

Sources of Inspiration

- Practitioners Synthesized the thinking of leaders across the country.
- Education Thinkers & Researchers
- Organization Development & Change
- Public Sector & Heath Care

A Major Iteration of AA3
Q & A

For more info and to register, go to bit.ly/sli2017

How we think about this work

- Deepen your knowledge of hands-on instructional leadership tools.
- Take back practical strategies you can immediately use with your school teams.
- Get new ideas for transforming professional learning with a focus on equity.

Build expertise through teaching and coaching

Reciprocal accountability

The whole central office is involved

Engaging in joint work
What strategies have we found to be particularly effective in this work?

1. The use of inquiry as an approach to problem-solving when it comes to student problems of learning and both instructional and leadership problems of practice.

2. The use of data and evidence to support performance assessment and decision-making.

3. Intentional planning for 1:1 visits with principals using pre-planned agendas and the development of learning plans for principals.

4. A focus on the need to balance the work of supervision with the work of coaching and support.

5. A focus on effective coaching.