

Instructional Leadership: Definitions and Evidence

Presentation for the Texas Education Agency

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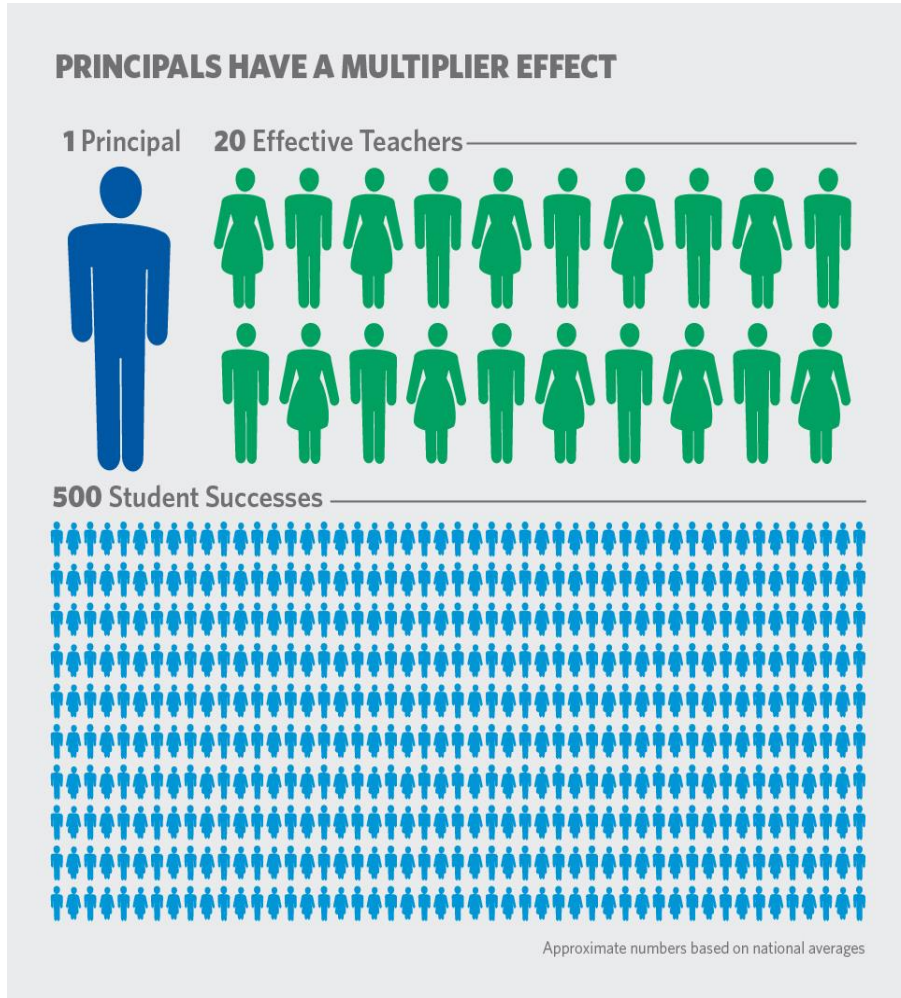
Agenda

- Principals' Changing Roles: Evidence and Standards
- Defining instructional leadership practice
 - Instructional leadership as the principal
 - Instructional leadership as a distributed task in schools
- Questions

Questions addressed by this presentation

1. How is "instructional leadership" defined?
2. What is the evidence base for instructional leadership?

The Principal Workforce Matters



What we know (and research tells us)

- Second most influential school-level factor in student learning (impacts are likely higher in high-poverty schools).
- Strong influence on teacher instructional decision-making and capacity, decisions to join or leave schools, and abilities to collaborate
- Influences school culture/climate
- Determine the pace and priorities for school improvement

Sources for statements: Branch et al., 2012; Clifford et al., 2012; Clifford et al., 2017; Grissom et al., 2015; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Herman et al., 2014; Jacob, et al., 2015; Leithwood et al., 2014; Rosenholtz, 1989

The Principal Workforce Matters

What we know (and research tells us) about the principal workforce:



- The new generation is younger, with less teaching experience.
- The percentage of females in principal positions has increased more dramatically than racial/ethnic diversity.
- Principal workforce is more mobile.
- Principals' work has changed, and has become more technical.
- New principals report being underprepared on key leadership tasks.
- Principals want access to better feedback and professional development that advances their practice.

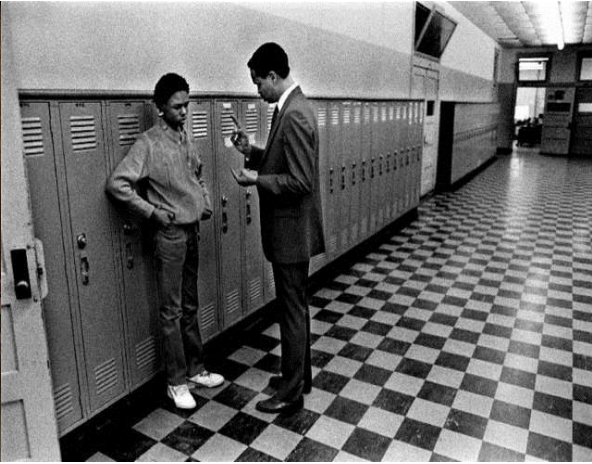
Sources: Baker et al., 2014; Clifford et al., 2014; Darling-Hammond et al., 2010; Gates et al., 2008; Gates et al., 2013

Changing Role of Principals

1950's



1990's



2010's



Changing Role of Principal

1950's

1990's

2010's



Task diversification and distribution

Disciplinarian
Manager
Isolated

Disciplinarian
Manager
Community engaged

Disciplinarian
Manager
Community engaged
Instructional leader

Workforce diversity

Sources for statements: Hallinger, 1992; Lortie, 2009; Rosmaniere, 2015

Changing Principal Standards

National policy standards for educational leaders, have been updated.

Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (2008)	Professional Standards for Education Leaders (2015)
1. Vision	1. Mission, vision and core values 10. School improvement
2. School culture and instructional program	4. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment 5. Community of Care and Support for Students 6. Professional Capacity of School Personnel 7. Professional Community for Teachers and Staff
3. Operations, management and resources	5. Community of Care and Support for Students 6. Professional Capacity of School Personnel 9. Operations and Management
4. Collaboration with faculty and community	8. Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community
5. Ethics	2. Ethics and Professional Norms 3. Equity and Cultural Responsiveness
6. Political, social, legal and cultural context	3. Equity and Cultural Responsiveness* 8. Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community

Standards written by National Policy Board for Education Administration, 2008, 2015. Analysis of alignment completed by the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders, 2016

Changing Principal Standards

National policy standards for educational leaders, including principals, have been updated.



Differences between ISLLC and PSEL

- More responsibilities and increasingly technical knowledge and skills
- Emphasis on proactive engagement
- Recognition of leadership role in improving educational equity, teacher equitable distribution and instigating conversation about personal/organizational biases
- Increased emphasis on **instructional leadership**, with engagement in decisions on curriculum, instruction, assessment, data use, and data management.

Research review: Instructional Leadership

Definitions of Instructional Leadership



“What you do makes a difference and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.”

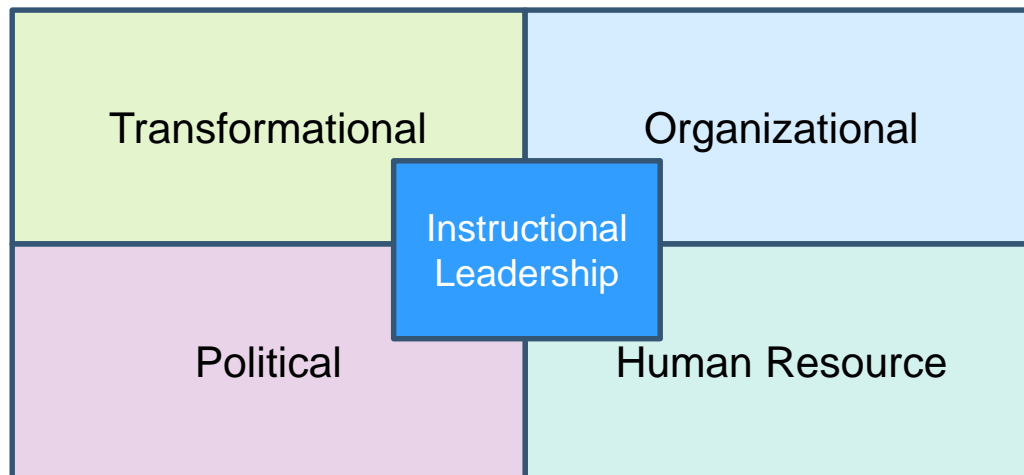
– Jane Goodall

Successive research studies have explored the relationship between easily observable principal characteristics (e.g., demographics, years of experience in education) and variation in school performance, when controlled for organizational factors and student demographics.

Many point to *instructional leadership* practice critical to explaining differences.

Definitions of Instructional Leadership

Historically, “instructional leadership” comes from the effective schools movement, and the notion of the “lead teacher” or “head teacher.” Definitions of the term abound, but generally, instructional leadership pertains to the management of teaching and learning in schools.



Instructional leadership is often contrasted with other forms of school leadership, like “transformational leadership,” “organizational management,” “human resource management.” But, definitions of instructional leadership overlap with these other areas of school leadership practice.

Hallinger, 2005; Murphy, 1988; Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe, 2008; Marzano, Waters and McNulty, 2005

Definitions of Instructional Leadership

Many practices have been associated with instructional leadership, including:

- Observation-based feedback to teachers on instruction
- Presence in classrooms
- Expertise in teaching content
- Setting high standards for students
- Articulating instructional goals
- Engagement with teachers in instructional decisions
- Building trusting relationships with teachers
- Inspiring teachers to innovate
- Protecting instructional time
- Creating strong working conditions for teaching
- Promoting teacher collaboration
- Adequately resourcing classrooms

Direct engagement with teachers

Indirect engagement with teachers

Responsibilities for Instructional Leadership



Instructional leadership practice has been ascribed to:

Principals (or assistant principals): This is the “leader as hero” model, wherein leadership practices are ascribed to an individual person.

Many people in schools: This is the “distributed leadership” model, where leadership is treated as a set of tasks taken up by many.

Responsibilities for Instructional Leadership

	Instructional leadership	
Category	Individual practice	Distributed practice
Unit	Person leads, typically principal or assistant principal	Many lead, including principal, assistant principal, district staff, teacher-leaders, teachers, parents
Emphasis	Knowledge and skill (e.g., the standards and daily work)	Systems and tasks (e.g., school functions, culture, network)
Strength	Observable in person's daily work	Recognizes limitations of individuals and the possibility of distributed knowledge around complex learning issues

Evidence on individual practice

We located one distributed leadership study focusing on instruction that involved a large number of schools. The study found a positive correlation between distributed leadership and student learning gains in math and reading.

Evidence on distributed practice

A few studies have examined the relationship between principal instructional leadership practices (specifically direct engagement with teachers) and school performance or student performance. The studies associated the following behaviors with better student performance:

1. More time spent coaching teachers
2. More time spent evaluating teachers and providing feedback
3. Engagement in curriculum and instruction decisions

Questions and Comments

Questions

1. How much should instructional leadership be emphasized in principal preparation, professional development, evaluation and standards?
2. Which approach (e.g., individual, distributed or both) might the state emphasize in its work with schools?
3. How can a research agenda be developed to show the prevalence of instructional leadership in schools, changes in the prevalence and changes in student learning?

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