Leadership for Learning

There is much talk in the field about the need for "good" leadership, both at the teacher and principal levels. Many leadership models have grown out of these conversations. In addition, standards such as the ISLLC (2008) standards have been developed to define what is meant by "good" leadership. In the context of a bigger picture, the leadership models described herein represent various approaches for meeting a widely accepted set of standards for the profession, such as the ISLLC (2008) standards.

Much of the research on leadership prior to the mid-1980s was grounded in a more traditional view based on the positional power of the principal in an organization that was hierarchically structured (Prestine, 1994). More recently, leadership models that are described as constructivist, transformational, distributed, moral, facilitative, primal, developmental, or instructional, to name a few, are making their way to the forefront of the literature on leadership models that encompass the roles of both teacher and principal.

Goldring and Greenfield (2002) purport that given public education's complexities and challenges today, effective leadership will be the key to maintaining the health of the institution. They propose that present-day leadership models have emerged as an attempt to make sense of the changing role of school leaders given the changing nature of the public-school context itself. They have described four conditions that are specific to leadership in public education including (a) the moral dimensions of educational leadership; (b) stewardship of the public's trust; (c) complexity of the core schooling activities, specifically teaching and learning; and (d) the highly normative and people-intensive character of the school as a workplace.

The outside environment, or forces that shape and influence public education itself, also contribute to the leadership focus of school personnel in today's schools. For example, changing

school demographics including diversity, poverty, and changes in the traditional family structure are influencing the nature of leadership that keeps student learning as its central focus. Likewise, increasing criticism of public education and calls for greater accountability for student learning have resulted in reform movements that are influencing school governance structures and the adoption of reform frameworks. In addition, greater emphasis is being placed on developing teacher professionalism and leadership skills in an effort to bring about significant improvement in student learning (Sykes, 1996).

It is important to understand that the models of leadership that will be described are based on the premise that student learning is a central outcome of leadership practice, thus referred to as leadership for learning. In 1996, Bruce Sheppard examined instructional leadership and found that lack of a clear definition of instructional leadership was resulting in conflicting results about the role of principals and/or teachers as leaders. He found that how leadership was carried out in practice depended upon whether a narrow or broad definition was adopted. Narrowly defined, instructional leadership is the specific actions that are directly related to teaching and learning. In its broader definition, instructional leadership encompasses all activities that affect student learning. Sheppard (1993) describes Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) conceptualization as the most comprehensive definition as it reflected three broad categories of behavior which were broken down into more narrowly defined functions. Some of these functions include goal setting, communicating goals, supervising and evaluating instruction, promoting professional development, monitoring student progress, and coordinating curriculum. Many of these functions are still recognized in today's models of educational leadership as well as in the ISLLC (2008) standards which serve as a framework for leadership assessment.

There are a number of present-day leadership models that incorporate instructional leadership in its broadest sense: transformational leadership, shared leadership, distributed leadership, primal leadership, leading for social justice, strategic leadership, parallel leadership, symbolic leadership, learning-centered leadership, and socio-cognitive leadership. These models recognize that context plays a critical role in the application of the key components of the leadership model. For each model, both a definition along with a description of the educational leader's role in the model will be provided.

Transformational leadership. *Transformational leadership* involves offering a vision of what can be and engaging others by creating a sense of purpose and meaning for the vision. There is engagement in processes that generates energy for change. This energy helps to redefine the mission, renew commitment, and redesign the system to support the new vision. Sometimes born out of crisis, the collaborative process can transform individuals and thus their practice and ultimately the context in which they work (Roberts, 1985).

Coordinating teachers as instructional leaders and facilitating teachers who are empowered to carry out their defined roles distinguishes the transformational leader from the instructional leader according to Glickman (1991). Sergiovanni (1992) argued that when professionalism among teachers is encouraged from within the faculty, and facilitated by the principal, there is less need to emphasize the role of the leader as it usurps the development of professionalism among teachers because they rely on the leader to lead rather than facilitating processes to bring about change. The development of a climate and culture that supports learning along with collaborative approaches to decision making that involve teachers characterize the transformational leader and are more appropriate in today's environment where change is constant (Leithwood, 1994). It is important to note that follower acceptance may play

a critical role in the success of transformational leadership if one's view of leadership is that it (leadership) resides within the individual (Angus, 1989; Foster, 1989; Sergiovanni, 1995) rather than being shaped by the school context. Sergiovanni (1995) proposes that true transformational leadership occurs when a connection is made that forms a bond between the leader and followers that is based on a set of shared professional values. When this type of positive relationship occurs, there is a positive relationship among leadership behaviors and the level of teacher professionalism, teacher commitment to, and support of, the school as well as the innovativeness of the school (Sheppard, 1996). If transformational change is at the heart of transformational leadership, then what might it look like in the principal's practice?

As the traditional role of the principal in today's schools continues to be shaped by the ever-changing context of public education in response to demands for greater accountability for student learning and demographic shifts in the school population, then principals must be able to respond within the school context as transformation occurs in response to these new conditions (Bredeson, 1991). Understanding that the principal leader is now at the center of the network of the system in which they operate is a shift from the traditional pyramid view of the school organization. Because of this central position, the principal now has the opportunity to see those things that may serve as catalysts for change (Prestine, 1994). Leithwood, Jantzi, and Fernandez (1994), in looking at transformational leadership and teachers' commitment to change, found that conditions in the school have the strongest direct effects on teachers' commitment to change. This finding points to the significance of school climate and culture and the transformation thereof as a critical leadership function. The leader must also learn how to delegate leadership responsibilities (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990) and develop collaborative decision making processes (Leithwood, Jantzi, Silins, & Dart, 1992). In addition, transformational leadership involves

playing a less prominent and more supporting role in major initiatives, reducing micromanagement, participating in team meetings as a member rather than the chair, and getting things started and then letting go, enabling and supporting teacher success, helping to formulate a shared vision, allocating resources consistent with the vision, cultivating a network of relationships, providing information, and promoting teacher professional development (Murphy, 1994). Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1999) developed a model of transformational leadership that reflects eight dimensions of focus for the school leader:

> building school vision, establishing school goals, providing intellectual stimulation, offering individualized support, modeling best practices and organizational values, demonstrating high performance expectations, creating a productive school culture, and developing structures to foster participation in school decisions. (p. 9)

Being multidimensional in its scope, transformational leadership results in transformation of not only individual practice at the leadership level, but also at the teaching-learning level, and within the organization itself to actualize the shared vision to which all are committed.

Shared leadership. Like transformational leadership, *shared leadership* focuses on the shifting role of the principal. Paradoxically, the principal leader is charged with recreating internal processes that result in the sharing of the leadership functions. In this role, principals must create a context for shared decision making while still being accountable to a variety of constituent groups (Glasman & Heck, 1996). While acknowledging this paradox, shared leadership approaches question the individual level point of view and offer a group approach to leadership practice (Pearce & Conger, 2003; Senge, 1997; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 1999). In their work on shared leadership, Pearce and Conger (2003) offer three paradigm shifts that are inherent in shared leadership. One shift is that leadership is distributed and interdependent. It is reflected through shared responsibility, teamwork and collective achievement, which characterize the shared leadership model. It is the sum of parts that reflects

the results of shared leadership, recognizing that each part is critical in reaching the sum total. Shared leadership is characterized by a set of practices that are enacted by people at all levels of the organization rather than a set of attributes possessed only by people at the top (Pearce & Conger, 2003). A second shift emphasizes leadership as a social process and supports leadership practice that is embedded in social interaction. In this case, leadership is influenced and created out of the social interactions of the group. Shared leadership is an integral part of a dynamic collective activity that involves making sense of the interaction and drawing upon that cognition to beget leadership for the collective direction of the group (Lave & Wenger,1991). "Servant" leadership (Greenleaf, 1977) is sometimes used to describe this type of leadership as it represents a bottom-up rather that top-down approach to leadership. A third shift that characterizes shared leadership has to do with the interrelationships within and among the people in groups within the organization. Senge (1990) differentiated shared leadership practice from other leadership models in that its outcomes occur at multiple levels throughout the organization through mutual learning that results in greater understanding and eventually positive action. Pearce and Conger (2003) sum up the essence of shared leadership:

> …models of shared leadership reenvision the *who* and *where* of leadership by focusing on the need to distribute the tasks and the responsibilities of leadership up, down and across the hierarchy. They reenvision the *what* of leadership by articulating leadership as a social process that occurs in and through social interactions, and they articulate the *how* of leadership by focusing on the skills and ability required to create conditions in which collective learning can occur. (p. 24)

Distributed leadership. Another present-day leadership model that recognizes distributing the tasks and the responsibilities of leadership throughout the school rather than those aspects residing solely with one individual is *distributed leadership*. Lashway (2003a) offers two divergent viewpoints on distributed leadership. One viewpoint is that specific tasks

can be delegated to others in the organization, or rotated among key staff in the district or building. In contrast, a second viewpoint calls for a fundamental shift in organizational thinking and distributes the responsibility for leading across the individuals within the organization. In this way, individuals throughout the organization play lead roles based on their strengths and the assets they bring that can add value to the organization. Gronn (2002a) supports these two divergent interpretations of distributed leadership with the latter being considered a more holistic approach to the leadership practice. In a December 11, 2007 letter to its membership, National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP, 2008) Professional Outreach Associate, Rich Barbacane states:

> …the most important role of the building principal is to develop leadership talents of others. Distributed leadership is more than delegating tasks to teachers. It is acknowledging that the principal does not have all the answers. It is honoring the expertise among the faculty and nurturing collaboration through shared work. (p. 2)

As far back as 1996 and subsequently again in 2000, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) acknowledged the concept of distributed leadership as part of the key undertakings to which the organization would commit and focus its work around. The CCSSO's modeling the use of distributed leadership practices soon drew attention of others who saw this form of leadership as supporting the standards-based school reform movement (Elmore, 2000; Gronn, 2000). In 1999, Spillane et al. presented a paper at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association on distributed leadership as a theory of school leadership practice that is viewed as a dynamic interaction among those playing leadership roles in various situational and social contexts. In this view, distributed leadership is grounded in the context of the organization rather than in an individual in a specific position. They draw upon the theories of distributed cognition and activity theory as the conceptual foundations for leadership practice. In an applied context, knowing *what* leadership is needed and *how* to go about the process of

leading will directly impact the *actions* of leading in a given situation. In striving to bring about instructional improvement, how leaders perform their role would be most critical. Hallinger and Heck (1998), in their review of literature on leadership, found gaps in the processes school leaders use to create the conditions that support instructional innovation. It may well be that these *how* processes, if identified, could provide insights into training and evaluation models that can assist school leaders in developing their practice to mastery.

Primal leadership. While acknowledging the leadership capacity of individuals, teams, and organizations, Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002) draw upon brain research to put forth a model of leadership that draws upon emotional intelligence, namely *primal leadership*. They believe that leaders who create a positive condition that brings out the best in people, a condition they refer to as resonance, will determine whether all else the leader does will work well. While they highlight the power of the primal leader to inspire and motivate, they warn about the power of toxic leadership, which can damage the climate of the workplace. In their view of leadership, Goleman et al. (2002) describe primal leaders as being able to draw upon the emotional resources needed to thrive amidst chaos and turbulent change. These leaders are able to draw upon inner strength to be honest and truthful even when it is painful to do so. They are able to inspire others to do their best work and yet stay loyal when other job opportunities present themselves. Primal leaders create an emotional climate that fosters creativity, high performance, and positive interactions among members of the organization and those they serve.

Why is understanding primal leadership as a leadership model that has applicability in educational contexts important when many other educational leadership models focus on the tasks and processes of leadership? Similar to both transformational and shared or distributed leadership models, primal leadership acknowledges the significance of context. It also

acknowledges that leadership does not reside in one individual at the "top" of the organization. Likewise all of these models reflect a social and cognitive component that not only involves making sense of the context but also using social interactions to bring about change. The primal leadership model explicitly acknowledges the emotional intelligence attribute that is a key influence on the social conditions that bring about change. Primal leaders' success depends on how they steer emotions in the right direction. Primal leaders will use their emotional intelligence to create conditions that feel the way they need to in order to bring about change. They will "read" the emotional climate of the environment and assess that climate to determine if the conditions are right for moving ahead. Although this functional role of the primal leader is often invisible and has been difficult to include among the delineations of responsibilities that are typically reflected in descriptions of other leadership models, Goleman (2001) developed a set of leadership competencies based upon emotional intelligence. These competencies include: *self-awareness* which encompasses emotional self-awareness, accurate self-assessment, and self-confidence; *self-management* including self-control, transparency, adaptability, achievement, initiative, and optimism; *social awareness* that reflects empathy, organizational awareness, and service; and *relationship management* that involves inspiring, influencing, developing others, acting as a change catalyst, managing conflict, and teamwork and collaboration.

Leadership for social justice. A slight side-step from the discussion on leadership models, but nonetheless pertinent in today's era of heightened accountability for student learning, is *leadership for social justice*. If measurement of student progress continues in the direction it began through the NCLB Act, then it will continue to divide and separate learners into subcategories under which learning will be further scrutinized. It is typical that these are the categories that encompass marginal learners who also require a level of advocacy as a learner

group in order to move beyond the limitations that current assessment practices impose upon learners in these categories. These advocates, in the context of leadership, are leading for social justice in order to enhance the scope of integrated comprehensive services that are necessary for these "marginalized" learners (Frattura & Capper, 2007). According to Frattura and Capper (2007), leading for social justice is built upon not only the premise that the leader holds an internal belief that heterogeneous settings are the best for student learning, but also that they have the skills and knowledge to put this belief into practice. Social justice leaders work to lessen labeling while at the same time identifying individual student needs and working to meet those needs in the context of the heterogeneous learning environment. Leaders for social justice do not use stereotypes or lack of understanding about a particular group or even their own discomforts when making decisions about opportunities for learning or involvement in the school. Social justice leaders imagine school functioning differently from how they current do. They see similarities across student differences in the ways they are treated, respected and educated. As a result, these leaders also serve as advocates for students who struggle in their school and don't accept any excuses for why these learners are not achieving. It follows, then, that social justice leaders must be willing to be transparent about student achievement in their schools and honest about where they are in the process of meeting learner needs even if there is a discrepancy between the achievement of underrepresented groups and the general population of the school. In efforts to do so, social justice leaders continue to learn about those areas of equity and diversity about which they have limited knowledge or experience so that they can be better able to advocate for the needs of these learners. Finally, to resist the pressure to adhere to their core beliefs, social justice leaders must place themselves in contexts that enable them to continually develop and sustain their beliefs.

So what does social justice leadership look like? Social justice leaders make decisions in the best interest of students. They work to resist making decisions that respond to external needs of adults and/or political pressures. They create an organizational structure that has at its core, student learning and student needs. They recognize that all teachers and staff are directly connected to learners and that their role is to support and nurture that relationship while removing barriers and creating conditions for equity for all learners. They also recognize that developing the leadership capacity of all staff will ensure that social justice permeates the culture of the school. In doing so, social justice does not become a fad or movement that will pass once the leader moves on, but rather a way of being for all within the organization. Greenleaf (1977) talks about servant leadership and its corresponding characteristics of leading with the heart based on caring and ethical practices as being at the core of leadership practice. Capper (1993) extends this notion of leadership from concept to practice in that many leaders can lead from the heart and believe they are doing the right things yet not be doing them in the right way. Her example of writing a grant to support further separate at-risk learners from their classmates as a way to meet their needs as learners is done out of caring, but is not socially just. Leaders for social justice learn from the past about what is effective and what has not worked for students who struggle to learn. These leaders demonstrate courage in the face of external pressures to succumb to economic and political pressures. They work with families to support their children in the learning environment rather than blame families for student failure. They create a school climate that promotes a positive and caring environment where failure is a stepping stone for further learning and doesn't imply that one is inherently "good or bad" because of their performance. Social justice leaders set a mission that advances social justice. They collect data that inform decision making, and develop teams to engage all in making decisions about teaching

and learning. Social justice leaders work to remove systems barriers and reallocate the use of existing resources to accomplish goals that focus on student learning. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and NCLB may very well be examples of legislation with intention of caring for and meeting the needs of the implicated populations, but the means utilized to do so are actually unjust. This example emphasizes the critical nature of the core belief that all students learn best when they are educated in heterogeneous groups and that all educators have the skills and knowledge to carry out this belief in practice.

Strategic leadership. Another leadership model which has its roots in commercial organizations, but has become increasingly more relevant in education contexts, is that of *strategic leadership*. According to Fidler (2002), strategic leadership is the process of formulating, planning, and implementing a distinctive and successful strategy for the future of the whole organization in the longer term. To apply this definition in the context of education, one may associate the use of plans and strategies that are designed to facilitate the movement of the organization from a current state to a more desired state. The use of strategic planning processes that result in short- and long-term plans for the district or school are evidence of this type of model. Specifically, strategic leaders consider a set of variables that may influence the delineated process for bringing about the desired change or movement to a current state to a desired state. One of these variables, the long-term intention, as included in Fidler's (2002) definition, deserves immediate attention in strategic planning as the scope and sequence of the plan may be directly influenced depending upon length of the time frame for accomplishing the plan. Other variables that are considered in the initial development of the strategic plan, but that must be monitored throughout the process, include the external environment and related factors that influence the plan, internal strengths of the organization, the organizational culture,

expectations of stakeholders, and resources. Strategic leaders consider these variables in a thoughtful and planned way in order to achieve the predetermined desired ends of their leadership efforts (Senge, 1990). It must be noted that a plan is just that: a plan. Strategic leaders develop plans knowing that modifications may need to be made based upon shifts in any number of the variables that influenced the initial development of the plan. The processes for developing and implementing the plan can be either formal or informal. Using prescribed processes and formulating a written plan with specific goals and action plans may be appropriate in some cases. In others, the informal use of strategic planning to guide the movement of the district and serve as a basis from which to make consistent decisions may be more appropriate, especially in small districts where layers of organizational structure do not require formal communication processes. Eisenberg and Barry (1986) reflected on leaders who function as informal strategic planners as gifted intuitive leaders who know what the strengths and weaknesses of their organization are and how to read opportunities and threats before others do so they can proceed without formal planning. The use of explicit or implicit strategies for planning characterizes the strategic leader. Moreover, strategic thinking is the attitude of mind that is reflected in the practice of effective strategic leaders. This leadership approach certainly has application in today's school context as greater accountability for student learning along with dwindling resources at the local school level combine to create long-term challenges in school districts.

Symbolic Leadership

Another model that sheds light on *how* leadership works is seen in a study conducted by Reitzug and Reeves (1992). They began to uncover the notion of *symbolic leadership* drawing upon the work on Sergiovanni (1984, 1991) who defined symbolic leadership as involving

selective attention and modeling to others what is important and valued in the school. Bolman and Deal (2003) furthered the idea of symbolic leadership as a way to help others make meaning out of the world in which they live, or in which they work by using symbols, rituals, ceremony, play, or humor, to name a few. Symbolic leaders understand that "everything speaks" as the process of making meaning is carried out. Reitzug and Reeves (1992) support this premise as they conceptualized symbolic leadership as taking place on two levels. *Overt* symbolic leadership occurs in non-routine forms such as slogans, stories, songs, and ceremonies. *Embedded* symbolic leadership results from individual interpretations of the meaning of routine daily actions, language, or discrete visual symbols. Further analyzed, a leader's actions may or may not be perceived as being congruent with what those actions mean unless symbolic representations are used to assist in making meaning that is consistent with actions. The extent to which there is congruency between actions and meaning contribute to the overall development of the culture of the organization. Knowing this, effective symbolic leaders can thoughtfully send symbolic messages that reflect their beliefs and values about appropriate directions for the school while continuing to honor the values and beliefs of the organization itself and its individual members. Deal and Peterson (1999) in their discussions on shaping school culture acknowledge one of the most significant roles of leaders and leadership is to create, encourage, and refine the symbols and symbolic activity that helps the organization give meaning to its central work around student learning.

Learning-centered Leadership

While it is implicit in the leadership models previously described, *learning-centered leadership,* simply stated, is the behaviors of leaders that influence the factors that in turn influence student learning. Murphy, Elliot, Goldring, and Porter (2006) observed that these

leader behaviors are shaped by the leader's prior experiences (classroom teacher or assistant principal), the knowledge base acquired over time, the individual's own personal character traits (achievement or power need, energy level), and the set of values and beliefs reflected in their leadership practice (how decisions are made). A key underpinning of learning-centered leadership is that the impact of leadership on learning can be assessed at various points along the learning continuum and this assessment employs multiple dimensions that define each aspect of the model. For example, there are eight dimensions that define the knowledge base of learning-centered leadership which were derived from the ISLLC *Standards for School Leaders* developed by the CCSSO in 1996, and subsequently revised on 2006 and 2008: (a) vision for learning, (b) the instructional program, (c) the curricular program, (d) the assessment program, (e) communities of learning, (f) resource acquisition and use, (g) organizational culture, and (h) social advocacy.

It is important to note that several assumptions are implicit in the learning-centered leadership model. First, leaders can continue to refine of modify their behaviors using feedback from the assessment on the learning continuum in order to achieve desired results. Second, leaders are achievement oriented. Third, leaders assess current and desired states and purposively select strategies to achieve desired results. Fourth, leaders draw upon a variety of resources, including their staff, to achieve desired results, and can align the use of those resources towards achieving desired outcomes. Finally, learning-centered leadership draws upon aspects of many of the models previously described and uses them as means for achieving a desired end. These assumptions are critical in the context of principal evaluation processes as they contribute to the motivational aspect of the principal to want to improve their own practice in order to achieve desired ends.

Learning First Leadership

Another approach to leadership that explicitly denotes learning as its primary focus is *learning first leadership*. Grounded in the same assumptions as learning-centered leadership, the learning first leadership model is a socio-cognitive leadership model in which school leaders engage in problem solving which is sensitive to the unique context of a given school (Kelley & Shaw, 2009). It is consistent with the instructional and transformational models developed by Hallinger (2003) and Leithwood et al. (2004). The problem-solving aspect of this model is most appropriately carried out in the context of a community of leaders (Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Senge, 1997; Wenger, 1998; Wenger et al., 2002). Using common cognitive problem-solving strategies embedded within the social context of the learning or leading community, leadership emerges in response to a desire for continuous improvement in both processes and desired outcomes. Three key elements comprise the learning first leadership model: (a) socio-cognitive leadership, (b) dimensions of leadership for learning, and (c) levers of change. The socio-cognitive leadership element, or *what*, incorporates shared vision, problem solving with data, evidence-based planning, value-added results, and reflection for continuous improvement. The dimensions of leadership for learning, or *where*, encompass advancing equity and excellence in student learning, developing teacher capacity, managing and aligning resources, and building an engaged community. The levers of change, or *how*, consider the individual leader, the organizational system, the external community, and the district's role and the way in which these variables influence the process of change. Principals who practice socio-cognitive leadership have not only seen significant improvements in student learning, but also observe growth in their schools as learning organizations (Kelley & Shaw, 2009).

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