

THE PRINCIPAL STORY

Questions for PTV Panelists



Vision

Educational leaders promote the success of all students by facilitating the vision, development, articulation and implementation of learning that the school community shares and supports. How does a principal ensure that a vision of high expectations for teachers and students permeates every aspect of a school?

Principals face persistent challenges related to transferring the school vision into accountable practices that have an impact on teaching and learning. What actions must leaders consistently employ to use school vision to increase achievement for all students?

What barriers do principals face in creating and leading a compelling vision for teaching and learning? How can central office administrators support principals in those efforts?

Instructional Leadership

Research tells us that leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school. What can your state or district do to make stronger leadership part of its strategy to raise student achievement, deliver quality teaching and improve schools?

What does it mean for principals to *lead instructional improvement* in their schools? What types of actions can make a difference? What examples and results can you cite regarding principals being able to influence instruction and student achievement in their schools?

The role of the principal has changed; his/her job is complex and demanding. How do district administrators support principals in focusing on instructional leadership while balancing multiple roles and responsibilities? What autonomy do principals have to make decisions that enable them to focus on and improve instruction?

Today's principals are challenged to provide ongoing support for teachers and to create and to maintain an environment conducive to high-quality teaching and learning. What is your school or district doing to train and support principals so that they are effective instructional leaders?

Creating an Instructional Environment

Creating an instructional environment conducive to learning for all students and teachers is a top priority for a school leader. To what degree do you believe principals in your district are prepared to lead teachers in creating high-quality instructional environments so that all students succeed in school? What actions do central office administrators take to support principals in creating effective instructional environments?

Describe an effective instructional environment for students and teachers. What are its key characteristics? What responsibilities do principals have for creating and maintaining such an instructional environment? How can developing the leadership skills of staff help to build learning environments that can be sustained?

What roles do mentors and principal supervisors play in improving instructional environments? How can they communicate the importance of an instructional environment that includes all learners in positive terms? What data might help principals to assess the effectiveness of instructional environments in their schools?

What do principals and teachers need to know and do in order to create instructional environments that promote learning for students from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds? What are the best ways to acquire the knowledge and skills to help promote learning for all students?

Well-organized and meaningful data can help teachers improve the instructional environment in their schools and classrooms to increase student learning. What data sets provide teachers with information about their instructional environments? What data are available in your schools and districts, and how are they used? What is the role of the principal in supporting the use of this data?

Holding People Accountable / Using Data

Principals create accountability through measuring and monitoring results. What kinds of data does your state or district make available to principals? Are data produced in ways that are timely enough and adequate for leaders to use in making instructional decisions that can improve teaching and learning?

What expectations does your state or district have for how principals use data? How are these expectations communicated, and how well are they understood by principals and reinforced by the programs that prepare them? How can these expectations be made more explicit or more widely shared?

Data can provide a range of information to principals, including the impact and value that leaders and teachers have added. What does effective data look like and what questions does it answer? What information does it provide to education leaders? What does good data look like and what questions do they answer?

During the past decade or so, all states have implemented accountability systems that focus on student achievement. What are the components of an effective school and district accountability plan? What are the strengths and challenges in your state accountability program? What policies or practices might strengthen school and district accountability?

School leaders who use accountability to improve instruction have meaningful support from their districts. What support does your district and central office staff provide to principals for making accountability work to improve instruction and student performance? What strategies does your district use to support principals in using data to guide school change?

Turning Around Low Performing Schools

How is your state or district developing leaders with the special skills required to transform struggling schools? What are the different roles that your state, districts and universities/principal training programs play in this process and how can collaboration be strengthened?

We are not training enough highly qualified principals to fill the increasing vacancies in schools – particularly in schools that face the greatest challenges. Is there a shortage of effective school leaders in your state or district? What are some of the causes of principal shortages in low-performing schools? What impact do shortages have? What are some immediate and long-term solutions?

What can principals of low performing schools do to improve instruction? What options does your district have for helping low performing teachers and principals improve instruction?

Much is written and said about the achievement gap that separates low-income and minority students from other students. What experiences and successes have you had promoting instructional improvement in schools with low-performing students? How does the leadership of the principal influence this instructional result?

What are the next steps your state or school district must take to implement the best training model to ensure more qualified principals are ready to turn around underperforming schools?

Principal Training and Mentoring Programs

To what extent does professional development in your state, district or university/principal training program focus on instructional leadership to improve learning? How closely are principal training programs aligned with district needs and expectations? Where are the gaps in professional learning for principals?

Many school districts use mentoring programs for beginning school leaders, and a few mentor practicing principals. How does your district mentor principals so that they use practices that improve instruction? How do you ensure that principals engage in high-quality professional learning for instructional improvement?

What should the next generation of principals look like in your state or district? How might they compare with current principals? What policies and training programs are needed to produce that next generation? What evaluation practices are needed?

We know that well-prepared school leaders are key to helping students and schools meet higher expectations. What is your definition of “qualified principals”? What qualities and skills do they possess? How are they better able to effect positive change in a school’s culture and climate?

One of the key issues for any aspiring leader program is how to select those who will participate. What are good selection criteria and methods? What should be the process,

as the training proceeds, of predicting whether participants will become effective principals?

Questions were drawn from:

THE PRINCIPAL STORY Field Book: Promoting Leadership for Learning (draft version)
developed by the National Staff Development Council

Conversation Guide: Executive Video for Policymakers: Leadership Matters (draft version)

This project is part of THE PRINCIPAL STORY outreach campaign, which is made possible by a generous grant from The Wallace Foundation, a source of ideas for improving school leadership. Visit www.wallacefoundation.org/principalstory.



For more information and research about education leadership, visit the Wallace Knowledge Center at www.wallacefoundation.org