



The Institute for  
Education Leadership  
L'Institut de leadership  
en éducation

[www.education-leadership-ontario.ca](http://www.education-leadership-ontario.ca)

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Dear Colleagues in Education,

The Institute for Education Leadership (IEL) is pleased to provide you with information pertaining to the official launch of the Strong Districts and Their Leadership section of the IEL website ([www.education-leadership-ontario.ca](http://www.education-leadership-ontario.ca)).

The resources posted on the website are a compendium of professional learning materials that complement and further the *Strong Districts & Their Leadership* (Leithwood, 2013) research which identified nine characteristics of high performing school districts and the practices of senior leaders in those districts. Districts contribute to the learning and well-being of children and youth in their systems to the extent that they develop these key characteristics thereby advancing the four interconnected goals for education set out in [Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario](#): achieving excellence, ensuring equity, promoting well-being and enhancing public confidence.

The resources draw on the expertise of senior district leaders who have contributed their experiences related to one or more of the nine characteristics of high performing school districts. The stories presented as case studies and then integrated into professional learning modules, serve as a vehicle for further developing and strengthening leadership practices across the province.

This section of the IEL website is designed as a professional learning support that can be used in a variety of ways and have different formats and content depending on the district focus and its approach to capacity building.

On the website you will find:

- **Eight Modules** that provide real-life case studies written or video-recorded by senior district leaders to show how they enact the leadership practices and draw on the personal leadership resources (PLRs) of the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) to build and sustain strong districts. Each module includes the following components:
  - **An annotated agenda** that can be tailored to individual interests and needs. It includes objectives and an overview of relevant research using a PowerPoint presentation as well as a synopsis of case studies used to support the characteristics featured in the module;
  - **Self-assessment** consists of a set of questions that can be used to determine how participation in the module has built capacity of the district senior team and/or increased their awareness of challenges and promising practices associated with the characteristic featured in the module;
  - **Suggested questions** to promote reflection and discussion of each case;
  - **Samples of relevant research** related to the characteristic featured;
  - **Case Studies** which will vary in number for each module.

## Suggestions on how to use this resource:

- **Embed the professional learning in the work** - In addition to opportunities that may be available in districts for learning from the case studies in stand-alone formal professional learning contexts, job-embedded approaches that are timely and tailored to current challenges, contexts and circumstances hold greater promise for building capacity focused on building strong districts. Senior district leaders not only model learning but also shape the conditions for others to learn on a continuous basis.
- **Focus on the characteristic(s) that need to be strengthened**
  - Choose a module whose focus is on a characteristic that is relevant to your current circumstances – one that has been identified as needing to be improved or strengthened.
  - Use guiding questions that are included in the modules as a springboard for problem-solving discussions that can help identify ways to address your current realities.
- **Become familiar with the case studies related to the selected characteristic(s)**
  - There are many professional learning designs that can be used in job-embedded and formal learning contexts in schools and districts. Among these *The Power of Protocols: An Educator's Guide to Better Practice* by Joseph McDonald, Nancy Mohr, Alan Dichter and Elizabeth McDonald (2007) offers both insight and inquiry-oriented professional learning tools for transforming the culture of schools and districts and enriching professional interactions.
- **Identify challenges, promising practices, and applications:**
  - Use the challenge scenarios that are identified in the case studies to engage in problem solving, to generate additional strategies for addressing them and then consider application of the new strategies to current context.
  - Draw on the challenges and lessons learned in setting group professional learning goals.
  - Write next steps for case studies.
- **Integrate case studies or excerpts from case studies in existing professional learning contexts**
- **Draft new case studies and share with the IEL**
  - In teams, draft new case studies and use them as vehicles for monitoring and reflection at specified times of the school year to support strategic planning.
  - Use the new case studies as the basis for capacity building dialogue with peers across districts.
  - Submit your case studies to the IEL Coordinator for posting on the IEL website at [communication@education-leadership-ontario.ca](mailto:communication@education-leadership-ontario.ca).

Examples of existing professional learning programs and contexts in which these modules as a whole or in part can be used include the following:

- **In job-embedded professional learning contexts such as:**
  - mentoring
  - professional networks
  - study groups
- **In district leadership teams and with leaders across the district, for example:**
  - Consider the ideas presented in this resource as a reference for identifying strategies to support goal-setting of Board Leadership Development Strategy (BLDS) lead teams, and the Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement and Well-Being (BIPSA) teams that participate in the

Student Achievement Division's K-12 System Implementation and Monitoring (SIM) initiative or in RECs.

The evidence-based approaches provided in these resources provide frameworks and approaches that may be useful in working with the case studies as well as in the real-life improvement scenarios that will emerge from discussion.

We encourage you to submit your case studies to the IEL [communication@education-leadership-ontario.ca](mailto:communication@education-leadership-ontario.ca) for posting on the IEL website. If you require further information please do not hesitate in contacting the IEL.

We continue to encourage you to share resources and to use the resources that are posted on the APPLIKI section of the IEL website.

Please distribute this communiqué to educational leaders in your organization. We are looking forward to continuing our communication with you.



Norah Marsh  
Chair  
Institute for Education Leadership

c.c. The Learning Partnership  
Ministry of Education  
Ontario Catholic Supervisory Officers' Association  
Ontario Principals' Council  
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