

# SYSTEM-LEVEL LEADERSHIP

**Leadership is the exercise of influence on organizational members and diverse stakeholders toward the identification and achievement of the organization’s vision and goals**  
 Leadership practices described in the School-level Leadership section of the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) are equally useful for both school- and system-level leaders, but those practices are enacted in qualitatively different ways. This placemat of system-level leadership practices adds to those common leadership practices a set of unique practices demanded of system-level leaders organized by the nine characteristics of strong districts outlined in the *District Effectiveness Framework* (DEF). The practices and personal leadership resources below capture how system leaders contribute to the development of strong districts.

Establish broadly shared mission, vision and goals founded on aspirational images of the educated person	Provide coherent instructional guidance	Build district and school staff’s capacities and commitments to make informed decisions	Create learning-oriented organizational improvement processes	Provide job-embedded professional learning	Align budgets, time and personnel/policies/procedures with district mission, vision and goals	Use a comprehensive performance management system for school and district leadership development	Advocate for and support a policy-governance approach to Board of Trustee practices	Nurture productive working relationships with staff and stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that a transparent visioning/direction-setting process is carried out</li> <li>Consult extensively about district directions as part of the process</li> <li>Spend sufficient time to ensure that the mission, vision and goals (directions) of the system are widely known, understood and shared by all members of the organization</li> <li>Articulate, demonstrate and model the system’s goals, priorities, and values to staffs when visiting schools</li> <li>Embed district directions in improvement plans, principal meetings and other leader-initiated interactions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Align curricular goals, assessment instruments, instructional practices and teaching resources</li> <li>Insist on ambitious goals for teaching and learning</li> <li>Advocate for attention to the best available evidence to inform instructional improvement decisions</li> <li>Expect schools to focus on needs of individual as well as groups of students</li> <li>Encourage staff to be innovative within the boundaries created by the district’s instructional guidance system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use data from all available sources to assist decision making in the central office</li> <li>Insist on the use of the best available research and other systematically collected evidence to inform decisions wherever possible</li> <li>Encourage collaboration in the interpretation and uses of data</li> <li>Build system’s capacity and disposition for using systematically-collected data to inform as many decisions as possible</li> <li>Provide training for principals and staff on the use of data and research literature to sustain decision-making</li> <li>Model evidence-informed decision making to school staffs</li> <li>Ground interactions with, and advice to, trustees in sound evidence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Require improvement processes to be evidence-informed</li> <li>Set a manageable number of precise targets for district school improvement</li> <li>Include school-level leaders in decisions about district-wide improvement decisions</li> <li>Create structures and norms within the district to encourage regular, reciprocal and extended deliberations about improvement progress within and across schools, as well as across the system as a whole</li> <li>Develop and implement board and school improvement plans interactively and collaboratively with school leaders</li> <li>Create structures to facilitate regular monitoring and refining of improvement processes</li> <li>Acknowledge provincial goals and priorities in district and school</li> <li>Allow for school-level variation in school improvement efforts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide extensive professional learning opportunities for both teachers and school-level leaders, most of it through some form of learning community or on-the-job context</li> <li>Use internal system networks as the central mechanism for the professional development of school-level leaders</li> <li>Align the content of professional training with the capacities needed for district and school improvement</li> <li>Require individual staff growth plans to be aligned with district and school improvement priorities</li> <li>Hold staff accountable for applying new capacities by monitoring the implementation of school improvement plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Align the allocation of resources with district and school improvement goals</li> <li>Align personnel policies and procedures with the district’s improvement goals</li> <li>Align organizational structures with the district’s improvement goals</li> <li>Provide principals with considerable autonomy in the hiring of teaching staff</li> <li>Expect and assist schools to allocate instructional resources equitably</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use the best available evidence about successful leadership (e.g. OLF) as a key source of criteria used for recruiting, selecting, developing and appraising school and district leaders</li> <li>Match the capacities of leaders with the needs of schools</li> <li>Provide prospective and existing leaders with extended opportunities to further develop their leadership capacities</li> <li>Develop realistic plans for leadership succession</li> <li>Promote co-ordinated forms of leadership distribution in schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage trustees to focus on district policy and the achievement of the district’s goals and priorities (policy governance model of trustee practice)</li> <li>Encourage participation of the elected board in setting broad goals for its use in fulfilling its policy-setting and policy-monitoring responsibilities</li> <li>Regularly report to the board progress in achieving these broad goals</li> </ul>	<p><b>Internal district and school staffs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adopt a service orientation toward schools</li> <li>Develop communication systems and processes throughout the district to keep all members informed</li> <li>Develop open, accessible and collaborative relationships with principals</li> <li>Encourage reciprocal forms of communication with and among schools</li> <li>Promote high levels of interaction among school leaders. These interactions should include all school leaders and be driven by a shared sense of responsibility among school leaders for system improvement</li> <li>Create structures to facilitate reciprocal forms of communication. These structures and norms should result in deeply interconnected networks of school and system leaders working together on achieving the system’s directions.</li> <li>Buffer schools from external distractions to the district’s and schools’ priorities and goals</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Community Groups</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Routinely consult with community groups on decisions affecting the community</li> <li>Encourage staff to participate directly in community groups</li> <li>Demonstrate the importance the district attaches to its community connections</li> </ul> <p><b>Parents</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hold schools accountable for developing productive working relationships with parents</li> <li>Influence the work of schools toward fostering improved educational cultures in the home environments of their students</li> </ul> <p><b>Ministry of Education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop/maintain high levels of engagement with the provincial ministry of education</li> <li>Engage frequently with the ministry proactively rather than only responsively</li> <li>Make flexible, adaptive use of provincial initiatives and frameworks, ensuring that they contribute to, rather than detract from, accomplishing system goals and priorities</li> </ul>

## PERSONAL LEADERSHIP RESOURCES

Leaders draw upon the personal leadership resources to effectively enact leadership practices

Cognitive Resources	Social Resources	Psychological Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Problem-solving expertise</li> <li>Knowledge of effective school and classroom practices that directly affect student learning</li> <li>Systems Thinking*</li> </ul> <p>*Especially important for system leaders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perceiving emotions</li> <li>Managing emotions</li> <li>Acting in emotionally appropriate ways</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Optimism</li> <li>Self-efficacy</li> <li>Resilience</li> <li>Proactivity*</li> </ul> <p>*Especially important for system leaders</p>