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*Ontario Leaders Collaborating for  
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## **Module Six: Strong Districts and Their Leadership Characteristic *A Comprehensive Approach to Leadership Development***

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## Module Description \*

Research has pointed to the important contribution to student learning made by the development of effective school-level leadership and school leadership is second only to classroom instruction as an influence on student learning. School leadership development is a “high-leverage” strategy since small numbers of school leaders can potentially influence large numbers of teachers and; school leaders are clearly part of district “management,” with responsibilities for achieving district goals.

This module, through the use of case studies and exposure to the research engaged in, focused learning and sharing from a group of three very different school districts.

Strong districts ...

- Have well-designed and carefully implemented procedures for identifying, recruiting, selecting and appraising school level leaders.
- Implement procedures for transferring school-level leaders that does no harm and, whenever possible, adds value to improvement efforts underway in schools.
- Ensure that the most skilled leaders in the system are placed where they are most needed.
- Encourage school-level leaders, when useful, to supplement their own capacities with system-level expertise.
- Expect school-level leaders to be knowledgeable about the quality of their teachers’ instruction, a central criterion for selecting school leaders and for their performance appraisal.
- Have well-designed and carefully implemented procedures for identifying, recruiting, selecting, and appraising system-level leaders.
- Keep both the community and the central office staff focused on learning and support principals and teachers in their efforts to improve instruction and ensure high levels of learning for all students. These districts assume responsibility for significantly improving instructional leadership in schools.
- Expect the behavior of both district- and school-level leaders to reflect the leadership practices and personal leadership resources identified in the *Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF)*, as well as such other practices considered critical for local board purposes.
- Encourage coordinated forms of leadership distribution throughout the board and its schools.

## Agenda

### 1. Objective

As a result of participating in this module, district leaders will know how to significantly refine procedures in their districts for identifying, recruiting, selecting, developing and appraising both school-level and system-level leaders.

### 2. Overview of relevant research

- [Power Point presentation](#)

### 3. Case Study: Hamilton Catholic District School Board \*

*What can be learned from this case about how to build a comprehensive approach to leadership development?*

- Discussion of written case and what was learned from this case
- What was learned from the Hamilton Catholic District School Board case study that was useful to you?

### 4. Case Study: Durham District School Board \*

*What can be learned from this case study about how to build a comprehensive approach to leadership development?*

- Video overview of case study
- Discussion of the written case study (in teams of four or five people)
- Debriefing of what was learned from the written case study by each team
- Synthesis of key findings

### 5. Case Study: Ottawa Catholic District School Board \*

*What can be learned from this case study about how to build a comprehensive approach to leadership development?*

- Video presentation - Journey of Catholic Leadership
- Discussion of the written case study (in teams of four or five people)
- Debriefing of what was learned from the written case study by each team
- Synthesis of key findings

### 6. Case Study: Thames Valley District School Board

*What can be learned from this case study about how to build a comprehensive approach to leadership development?*

- Discussion of the written case study (in teams of four or five people)
- Debriefing of what was learned from the written case study by each team
- Synthesis of key findings

## **7. Case Study: York Region District School Board**

*What can be learned from this case study about how to build a comprehensive approach to leadership development?*

- Discussion of the written case study (in teams of four or five people)
- Debriefing of what was learned from the written case study by each team
- Synthesis of key findings

## **8. Compare and contrast the approaches to leadership development described in the case studies presented - full group discussion**

- Consider relationship to the relevant research and to the approaches to building a comprehensive approach to leadership development currently taken by the three case studies listed in this module
- Identify key lessons - what to do for sure, what not to do at any cost
- Concluding synthesis about how to build a comprehensive approach to leadership development

## **9. Analysis of District Results – Presentation and Discussion**

## Samples of Relevant Research

- Barber, M., Whelen, F., Clark, M. (ND). Capturing the leadership premium: How the world's top school systems are building leadership capacity for the future. McKinsey & Company.
- Earl, L., & Katz, S. (2005). What makes a network a learning network? National College for school Leadership, UK. Retrieved from <http://www.ncsl.org.uk/networked/networked-research.cfm>
- Fuller, E., Hollingworth, L. (2014). A bridge too far: Challenges in evaluating principal effectiveness, *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 50, 3, 466-499.
- Hargreaves, A. and Fink, D. (2006), *Sustainable Leadership*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.
- Honig M. (k012). District central office leadership as teaching: How central office administrator support principals' development as instructional leaders, *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 48, 4, 733-774.
- Leithwood, K., Azah, V. (2014). *Elementary and Secondary Principals' and Vice-principals' workload: Executive Summary*. Final research report: Ontario Ministry of Education.
- Leithwood, K., Azah, V. (2016). Characteristics of effective leadership networks, *Journal of educational Administration*.
- Leithwood, K., Patten, S., Jantzi, D. (2010). Testing a conception of how leadership influences student learning, *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 46, 5, 671-706.
- Leithwood, K., Sun, J. (2016). Helping REEP school leaders determine their school improvement priorities: Evidence from measures of the "four paths", Houston, Rice University, Final report of research.
- Leithwood, K. Sun, J., Pollock, K. (2017). *How school leaders contribute to student success: the four paths framework*. Switzerland: Springer International Pub.
- Mascall, B., Leithwood, K. (2010). Investing in leadership: The district's role in managing principal turnover, *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 9, 367-383.
- Northfield, S. (2014). Multi-dimensional trust: how beginning principals build trust with their staffs during leadership succession, *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 17, 4, 410-441.

Sun, J., Leithwood, K. (2017). Calculating the power of alternative choices by school leaders for improving student achievement, *School Leadership and Management*, 37, 1-2, 80-93.

The Wallace Foundation(2007). *Getting Principal Mentoring Right: Lessons from the field*. New York: The Wallace Foundation. [see especially the Summary and Highlights, pages 3 Zepeda, S.,Bengtson, E., Parylo, O. (2012). Examining the planning and management of principal succession, *Journal of Educational Administration*.

## Appendix A: Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board \*

### CASE STUDY

## Appendix B: Durham District School Board \*

### Guiding Questions

This case study describes Durham District School Board's efforts to enhance two characteristics of strong districts, learning-oriented improvement processes and job-embedded professional development for all members of the organization. Taken together, these characteristics are central to the district's leadership development efforts and are highly interdependent.

1. *How did this district go about revising its approach to leadership development? How does this process compare to your own approach?*
2. *This district made sure all documents and procedures related to recruitment, selection, appraisal and development were aligned. How has your district engaged in such alignment?*
3. *Does the "culture of mentoring" described in this case study reflect the culture in your district in any way? If so, how have you developed that culture? If not, how can you develop such a culture?*

### CASE STUDY

## Appendix C: Ottawa Catholic District School Board \*

### Guiding Questions

Ottawa Catholic District School Board has a long-standing tradition of offering leadership programs for all employees of the organization. Over time the board has developed and offered a total of 16 different leadership programs, which is unique to most districts.

1. *Why was it important for Ottawa Catholic District School Board to revisit their programs so that they were more inclusive of the personal leadership resources? Do you face similar circumstances in your district?*

One of Ottawa Catholic District School Board turning points was that feedback told them to better “leverage digital”.

2. *What have been the turning points in the development of your leadership programs and what are the changes you have made as a result?*
3. *As compared with Ottawa Catholic District School Board, has your district made adequate investments in a broad range of leadership opportunities and what factors do you have to consider in order to achieve make such investments?*

### CASE STUDY

## Appendix D: Thames Valley District School Board

### Guiding Questions

Thames Valley District School Board addressed a significant succession planning challenge with the appointment of 45 new administrators. In order to assist the newly appointed leaders, Thames Valley District School Board constructed a coaching and networking model. This two-day session was conducted to review the board’s leadership values, beliefs and understandings of their leadership practices in order to effectively formulate the approach that would be taken.

1. *How do the strategies used by your district for determining your leadership approach compare with those taken by this district?*

Thames Valley District School Board believed that leadership development for all board staff had been neglected so a more targeted approach to support the development of their central staff was undertaken.

2. *What are the ways in which you support the leadership journey of your board’s support staff inclusive of Human Resources, Finance, Facilities and*

*other related roles? How does this compare with the approach taken by Thames Valley District School Board?*

Thames Valley District School Board engaged system leaders by empowering them to assist with the leadership development of their colleagues. In addition, they have empowered Education Assistants, for example, in the lateral leadership development of those new to the role.

- 3. In your district how do you avoid the use of solely top down methods to provide leadership support? What new approaches, if any, will you consider after your review of this case study?*

### **CASE STUDY**

## **Appendix E: York Region District School Board**

### **CASE STUDY**



## Strong Districts and Their Leadership Research Ontario Wide Results \*

### Leading and Teaching in School<sup>1</sup>

*Items of Domain Variables, District Means, District Standard Deviation (SD) Ontario Means, and Ontario SD Based on School Leaders' Ratings*

<i>The extent to which you agree that the following statements accurately describe your school at this time (1 = Strongly Disagree; 2= Disagree; 3=Neutral; 4= Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree)</i>			<b>Ontario Mean</b>	<b>Ontario SD</b>
<i>The extent to which you agree that the following statements accurately describe your school at this time (1 = Strongly Disagree; 2= Disagree; 3=Neutral; 4= Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree)</i>				
<b>Academic Press or Emphasis</b>				
Aggregate (All items in scale)			<b>3.74</b>	<b>0.74</b>
a. My staff and I set high standards for academic success.			4.15	0.64
b. Most students respect others who get good grades.			4.06	0.69
c. Students seek extra work so that they can be successful.			2.97	0.87
d. Students try hard to improve on previous work.			3.44	0.76
e. Academic achievement is recognized and acknowledged by the staff and I in my school.			4.09	0.74
<b>Disciplinary Climate</b>				
Aggregate (All items in scale)			<b>3.61</b>	<b>0.97</b>
a. Students start working soon after lessons begin.			3.85	0.72
b. Students are rarely absent except for good reasons.			3.21	1.07
c. Students rarely get into fights.			3.88	1.01
d. There are not many conflicts among students in my school.			3.48	1.07
<b>Teachers' Use of Instructional Time</b>				
Aggregate (all items in scale)			<b>3.59</b>	<b>0.82</b>
a. Teachers' classrooms are free from distractions to student learning.			3.40	0.96
b. Teachers minimize time lost due to student lateness and absence.			3.34	0.88
c. Students are on task.			3.78	0.66
d. Conditions in teachers' classes allow for an appropriate pace of instruction.			3.70	0.78
e. Most teachers begin classes promptly.			3.91	0.79

<sup>1</sup> This result table reports the current status of each of the variables measured in the *Leading and Teaching Survey* completed by 878 school leaders in Fall 2016.

f. Most students are capable of taking charge of their own learning in age-appropriate ways.			3.43	0.88
<b>Classroom Instruction</b>				
Aggregate (all items in scale)			<b>3.44</b>	<b>0.85</b>
a. Teachers' instruction is explicitly guided by the goals that they intend to accomplish with their students.			3.65	0.74
b. Teachers monitor students' progress to make sure that they are actively engaged in meaningful learning.			3.67	0.72
c. Teachers provide prompt, informative feedback to students.			3.48	0.75
d. Student achievement results are carefully analyzed for differentiated instruction.			3.16	0.88
e. Instructional strategies enable students to construct their own knowledge.			3.33	0.78
f. Significant opportunities are provided for students to learn collaboratively.			3.69	0.78
g. Data are used to identify weaknesses in students' academic skills and to develop interventions to remediate or reteach.			3.50	0.83
h. Teachers supplement face-to-face instruction in schools with technology-facilitated assignments reinforcing what has been learned in class.			3.26	0.95
i. All students receive the same quality of instruction.			3.09	1.00
j. Struggling students get the attention they need.			3.36	1.00
k. Resources are allocated to support students with the greater needs.			3.70	0.92
<b>Teacher Trust in Others</b>				
Aggregate (All items in scale)			<b>3.93</b>	<b>0.77</b>
a. Most teachers trust their students to do their best work.			3.74	0.72
b. Most teachers in this school can count on each other for support.			4.27	0.77
c. Most teachers in my school trust me to provide the support they need to do their work well.			4.23	0.67
d. Teachers can count on support from most students' families.			3.50	0.93
<b>Teacher Collective Efficacy</b>				
Aggregate (All items in scale)			<b>3.80</b>	<b>0.80</b>
a. Most of my teachers believe that most of our students come to school ready to learn.			3.59	0.88
b. Most of my teachers are confident they will be able to motivate their students to learn.			3.82	0.73
c. Most of my teachers are able to get through to even the most difficult students.			3.54	0.84

d. Learning in this school is made easier because students feel safe and welcome.			4.17	0.72
e. Most of my teachers truly believe every child can learn			3.89	0.86
<b>Teacher Commitment</b>				
Aggregate (All items in scale)			<b>3.95</b>	<b>0.84</b>
a. Most teachers in my school believe very strongly in the school's values and goals.			4.17	0.74
b. Most of my teachers are willing to devote considerable effort to help accomplish the school's goals.			3.99	0.86
c. Most of my teachers are willing to adapt to changes that are aligned with school goals.			3.78	0.86
d. Most of my teachers are willing to "go the extra mile" to help students.			4.10	0.82
e. Most teachers refine their instructional strategies based on evidence.			3.56	0.90
f. Most teachers volunteer to help their school colleagues when they think they can be useful to them.			4.07	0.84
<b>Safe and Orderly Environment</b>				
Aggregate (All items in scale)			<b>3.99</b>	<b>0.84</b>
a. The learning environment in my school is safe and orderly.			4.27	0.72
b. Teachers in my school make serious efforts to promote an inclusive school.			4.30	0.74
c. My school emphasizes the prevention of youth violence in schools rather than suspensions.			4.22	0.77
d. My school uses threat assessment rather than violence surveys to assess the safety of the school.			3.62	0.99
e. My school provides mental health services for those students who need it.			3.88	1.08
f. School staff, parents and communities work together to promote school safety.			4.01	0.82
<b>Collaborative Cultures and Structures</b>				
Aggregate (All items in scale)			<b>3.65</b>	<b>0.82</b>
a. In my school teachers adjust instruction on the basis of feedback from other colleagues in the school.			3.35	0.86
b. Teachers in my school interact frequently with trusted colleagues outside our school in efforts to improve instructional practices.			3.34	0.92
c. Teachers in my school often challenge one another's beliefs about education.			3.08	0.93

d. Teachers in my school collaborate with one another to develop common assessment tools for measuring students' progress.			3.45	0.94
e. Teachers share instructional strategies that work.			3.90	0.76
f. Teachers and I ensure the collaborative efforts on student data analysis leads to changes in instruction in classrooms.			3.65	0.76
g. Our school celebrates the achievements of staff and students.			4.20	0.72
h. Teachers' conversations are primarily focused on teaching and learning when they meet together for professional learning.			3.83	0.85
i. Teachers in my school have sufficient autonomy to make collaborative decisions about teaching and learning.			4.04	0.68
<b>Organization of Planning and Instructional Time</b>				
Aggregate (All items in scale)			<b>3.61</b>	<b>0.99</b>
a. Teachers in my school have common planning times to discuss teaching and learning.			3.02	1.23
b. Teachers have regular opportunities to meet together for their professional learning.			3.49	1.09
c. The school's timetable maximizes instructional time for students.			4.12	0.83
d. I ensure that there are very few disruptions to student instructional time.			3.81	0.78
<b>Family Educational Culture</b>				
The extent of your efforts with your staff to engage with parents in each of the following five ways: (1 = <i>Not something we have given much thought to</i> ; 2= <i>to a small extent</i> ; 3= <i>to some extent</i> ; 4= <i>to a large extent</i> ; 5 = <i>We have been very successful with almost all parents who would benefit from our efforts</i> )				
Aggregate (All items in scale) <i>Most of my students' parents or guardians</i>			<b>3.64</b>	<b>0.84</b>
a. Help parents to develop high but realistic expectations for their children's success at school and beyond.			3.44	0.86
b. Help parents develop effective forms of communication with their children in the home about their children's academic work at school.			3.43	0.91
c. Encourage parents to participate in school events.			3.93	0.81
d. Help parents to learn how to assist their children's learning at home.			3.50	0.85
e. Encourage parents to discuss their children's progress at school with teachers.			3.89	0.76

<b>Leadership of the School as a Whole</b>			
<i>Please indicate the level of confidence you have in your own ability to effectively enact each of the leadership practices listed below: (1 = not at all confident; to a small extent; to some extent; to a large extent, 5 = very confident)</i>			
Aggregate (All items in scale)		<b>3.95</b>	<b>0.76</b>
a. Give staff a sense of overall purpose.		4.23	0.65
b. Help clarify the reasons for your school's improvement initiatives.		4.20	0.66
c. Provide useful assistance to your staff in setting short-term goals for teaching and learning.		3.95	0.72
d. Demonstrate high expectations for your staff's work with students.		4.25	0.69
e. Provide individual support to your teachers to help them improve their instructional practices.		3.81	0.81
f. Encourage your teachers to consider new ideas for their teaching.		4.13	0.73
g. Model a high level of professional practice.		4.45	0.64
h. Develop an atmosphere of caring and trust with your staff.		4.61	0.59
i. Promote leadership development among teachers.		4.16	0.75
j. Identify staff development needs and provide effective professional development accordingly.		3.91	0.75
k. Encourage collaborative work among staff.		4.19	0.72
l. Ensure carefully coordinated participation in decisions about school improvement.		3.93	0.77
m. Engage parents in the school's improvement efforts.		3.22	0.92
n. Build community support for the school's improvement efforts.		3.37	0.95
o. Help staff improve their instructional programs based on student data.		3.84	0.77
p. Ensure creative uses of appropriate technologies to achieve excellence and to maximize teaching and learning opportunities.		3.71	0.83
q. Provide resources to help staff improve their teaching.		4.05	0.68
r. Regularly observe classroom activities.		3.53	0.97
s. Work effectively with your teachers following classroom observation, to help them improve their instruction.		3.43	0.91
t. Create a relationship with your teachers that encourages them to discuss educational issues with you.		4.27	0.71
u. Encourage your teachers to use data effectively to improve their instruction.		3.82	0.76
v. Buffer your teachers from distractions to their instruction.		3.84	0.84

## Strong Districts and Their Leadership Research Ontario Districts Survey<sup>2</sup>

*Items of Domain Variables, District Means, District Standard Deviation (SD), Ontario Means, and Ontario SD Based on School Leaders' Ratings*

Features and Items		Ontario Mean	Ontario SD
<i>To what extent do you agree that your school system (1 = Strongly Disagree; 2= Disagree; 3= Agree; 4 = Strongly Agree)</i>			
<b>Mission, Vision and Goals for Students</b>			
Aggregate (All items in scale)		<b>3.32</b>	<b>0.64</b>
a. My school system has developed a widely-shared set of beliefs and vision about student learning and well-being that falls within the parameters set by the province.		3.65	0.57
b. My school system's beliefs and vision include a focus on closing achievement gaps.		3.72	0.50
c. My school system's beliefs and vision include a focus on "raising the achievement bar".		3.68	0.53
d. My school system's beliefs and vision include a focus on nurturing student engagement and welfare.		3.57	0.61
e. The elected board has helped to mobilize parents and the wider community in developing and supporting the vision?		2.80	0.77
f. The elected board has helped to mobilize teachers and administrators in developing and supporting the vision.		2.84	0.79
g. My school system's beliefs and vision for students are understood and shared by almost all staff.		2.97	0.74
<b>Coherent Instructional Guidance System</b>			
Aggregate (All items in scale)		<b>3.05</b>	<b>0.74</b>
a. Strongly supports schools' efforts to implement curricula that foster students' deep understandings about "big ideas", as well as to develop the basic skills students need to acquire such understandings.		3.26	0.68
b. Works effectively with schools to help provide all students with engaging forms of instruction.		3.09	0.71
c. Works effectively with schools to help establish ambitious but realistic student performance standards.		3.07	0.70
d. Has aligned all elements of school programs and resources (e.g., curriculum, instruction, assessment, staff, budget).		2.88	0.78

<sup>2</sup> This result table reports the current status of each of the variables measured in the *Ontario District Survey* completed by 699 district staff in Ontario, including 36 district leaders in the district in Fall 2016.

e. Instructional improvement work in my district includes teachers in a majority of schools and assists them in developing sophisticated understandings of powerful instruction for students.			2.95	0.82
<b>Multiple Sources of Evidence</b>				
Aggregate (all items in scale)			<b>2.93</b>	<b>0.77</b>
a. Have efficient information management systems?			2.88	0.77
b. Provide schools with relevant data about their performance?			3.04	0.78
c. Assist schools in using data to improve their performance?			2.97	0.77
d. Create collaborative structures and opportunities for the interpretation of data in schools?			2.87	0.76
e. Call on expertise from outside the school system for help with data interpretation when needed?			2.62	0.84
f. Use appropriate data for accounting to stakeholders?			2.97	0.71
g. Make effective use of existing research to guide policy making and planning?			3.13	0.73
<b>Professional Development for All Members</b>				
<i>How well do the following statements reflect your board's approach to professional development? (1 = Not at all; 4 = Very well)</i>				
Aggregate (all items in scale)			<b>2.91</b>	<b>0.80</b>
a. Very little time is devoted to routine administrative matters in meetings of teachers and principals. Meeting time formerly used for such matters is now devoted almost entirely to professional development.			2.85	0.79
b. Most professional development is carefully aligned with board and school improvement initiatives.			3.37	0.68
c. Differentiated professional development opportunities are provided in response to the needs of individual schools, administrators and teachers.			2.78	0.83
d. Extensive opportunities are provided for both teachers and administrators to further develop their expertise.			2.83	0.83
e. Almost all schools provide time for collaborative work on instructional improvement initiatives. Schools are provided with the resources they need to provide this time and leaders are provided with training in how best to facilitate such work.			3.00	0.80
f. Schools are provided with the resources they need to provide this time and leaders are provided with training in how best to facilitate such work.			2.64	0.87
g. All system-sponsored professional development is now closely aligned with the best evidence of how people learn.			2.90	0.80



<b>Professional Leadership</b>			
How well do the following descriptions apply to leadership development in your school district/ system/ board? (1 = Not at all; 4 = Very well)			
Aggregate (All items in scale)		<b>2.89</b>	<b>0.82</b>
a. My district has well-designed and carefully implemented procedures for identifying, recruiting, selecting and appraising school-level leaders.		2.76	0.89
b. My district implements procedures for transferring school-level leaders that does no harm and, whenever possible, adds value to improvement efforts underway in schools.		2.59	0.85
c. My board ensures that the most skilled leaders in the system are placed where they are most needed.		2.68	0.87
d. My board encourages school-level leaders, when useful, to supplement their own capacities with system-level expertise.		2.85	0.81
e. District leaders expect principals to be knowledgeable about the quality of their teachers' instruction. This is a central criterion for selecting school leaders and for their performance appraisal.		3.11	0.76
f. System leaders keep both the community and the central office staff focused on learning and they support principals and teachers in their efforts to improve instruction and ensure		2.95	0.77
g. Most district leaders encourage an instructional focus on the part of school leaders, provide opportunities and resources for improving the instructional leadership skills of school leaders and make this the main focus of their school visits. Instructional leadership is an explicit focus in selection and appraisal practices.		3.05	0.78
h. Our elected board expects the behavior of both system- and school-level leaders to reflect the leadership practices and personal leadership resources identified in the <i>Ontario Leadership Framework</i> , as well as such other practices as might be deemed critical for local board purposes.		3.17	0.80
<b>Alignment</b>			
<i>Which one of the statements below best captures your district's alignment of:</i>			
Aggregate (All items in scale)		%	of Ratings Ontario
a. its financial resources with the support needed to achieve the board's goals for student learning?			
1. No effort has yet been made toward such alignment.		0.6	
2. Unsystematic attempts are being made toward such alignment.		4.3	



3. Such alignment occurs on a project by project basis but does not extend across the board's efforts as a whole.			40.1	
4. My board has a systematic and ongoing process to continuously align our budget with the goals we are pursuing for students.			46.8	
b. personnel policies and procedures with the instructional expectations for staff				
1. No effort has yet been made toward such alignment.			2.1	
2. Unsystematic attempts are being made toward such alignment.			9.3	
3. Such alignment occurs on a project by project basis but does not extend across the board's efforts, as a whole.			43.8	
4. My board has a systematic and ongoing process to continuously align our personnel policies and procedures with the goals we are pursuing for students.			36.5	
c. structures with the instructional improvement work required of staff				
1. No effort has yet been made toward such alignment.			0.6	
2. Unsystematic attempts are being made toward such alignment.			7.0	
3. Such alignment occurs on a project by project basis but does not extend across the board's efforts as a whole.			47.1	
4. My board has a systematic and ongoing process to continuously align our organizational structures with our staff's instructional improvement work.			37.1	
d. the time and money allocated to professional development with the value of such PD to the district				
1. The board has an ambitious set of goals for improving student learning but has allocated very little time or money for preparing staff to accomplish those goals.			1.9	
2. While some time and money have been allocated for the professional development of leaders and teachers, these resources badly underestimate what will be required if staff are to accomplish the goals established by the district.			27.8	
3. Although still underestimated, there have been recent and significant increases in the time and money allocated to professional development			31.6	
4. Adequate amounts of both the time and money have been allocated for the professional development of both leaders and teachers.			30.5	

<b>Elected Leadership</b>			
<i>How well do the following statements describe the practices of the board's elected officials? (1 = Not at all; 4 = Very well)</i>			
Aggregate (All items in scale)		<b>2.92</b>	<b>0.80</b>
a. Trustees use the board's beliefs and vision for student learning and well-being as the foundation for strategic planning and ongoing board evaluation.		3.03	0.75
b. Trustees focus most policy making on the improvement of student learning and well-being consistent with the beliefs and vision.		3.01	0.77
c. Trustees identify and fund policies and programs that provide rich curricula and engaging forms of instruction for all students and eliminate those that do not.		2.84	0.79
d. Trustees maintain productive relationships with senior staff, school staffs, community stakeholders and provincial education officials.		2.98	0.84
e. Trustees provide systematic orientation opportunities for new members and ongoing training for existing members.		2.74	0.79
f. Individual trustees support and act in accordance with decisions made by the board of trustees, as a whole.		2.99	0.78
g. Almost all trustees avoid becoming involved in school system administration.		2.83	0.87
<b>Organizational Improvement Processes</b>			
<i>How well do the following descriptions capture your school system's approach to improvement? (1 = Not at all; 4 = Very well)</i>			
Aggregate (All items in scale)		<b>2.65</b>	<b>0.83</b>
a. My district pursues only a small number of improvement goals at the same time.		2.66	0.85
b. We usually proceed in manageable stages and use the early stages as learning opportunities.		2.76	0.80
c. My district's approach to improvement is relatively coherent. A small number of key improvement goals are consistently pursued over sustained periods of time.		2.81	0.81
d. Schools are not overloaded with excessive numbers of initiatives.		2.22	0.91
e. Considerable effort is made to build the capacities needed by school staffs for successful school improvement.		2.76	0.82
f. Board improvement efforts typically focus on one portion of the system at a time (e.g., elementary schools then secondary schools; literacy improvement then numeracy improvement)		2.50	0.87

and a schedule is created to ensure improvement in all parts of the school system over the long term.				
g. Improvement efforts in schools are guided by explicit and well-tested frameworks, policies and practices, as well as widely shared goals that permit local adaptation. All stakeholders have clearly defined roles to play in this approach to school improvement.			2.75	0.78
h. The board integrates new initiatives into existing routines and practices. Established structures and procedures are maintained and built on. Care is taken to ensure continuity and extension of core values.			2.74	0.78
<b>Relationships</b>				
<i>Pick the one statement below which best describes</i>				
Aggregate (All items in scale)			% of Ratings Ontario	
<b>Central Office Staff Relations</b>				
the relationships among staff in your school system's central office				
1. Central office staff work in isolation with only minimal communication and no sense of shared purpose.			2.7	
2. There is no evidence of shared purpose, but there is some connection among some roles and a limited amount of communication, although it is sometimes a bit strained.			24.2	
3. Roles are often interconnected and collaboration is common in response to a shared sense of purpose. Communication among staff is positive and occurs regularly.			47.8	
4. Roles are interconnected, work is undertaken collaboratively in the service of a widely shared set of purposes. Communication among staff is frequent and cordial.			16.3	
<b>District and School Staff Relationships</b>				
your district's support for networks or professional learning communities (PLCs)				
1. There is little awareness of the need for, or value of, professional networks or communities for either central office or school staffs.			7.3	
2. Networks and professional communities are evident in some schools and central office staff may participate occasionally in their own PLCs, but they are rarely viewed as effective instruments for staff learning or decision making.			8.2	
3. PLCs or networks are established at both school and system levels. While central office staff have come to value			51.6	

participation in their own PLCs or networks, they do not insist on such participation by teachers or administrators in schools.				
4. Networks and PLCs are well established at both school and system levels and have become the established way of solving problems and taking care of other business.			23.2	
<b>Relationships with Parents</b>				
a. your school system's efforts to help teachers and administrators develop the capacities they need to foster productive parent engagement <i>in the school</i> .				
1. We are expected to figure this out for ourselves.			12.4	
2. My board has provided some help in the past but no such help has been provided in the past year.			10.2	
3. School system staff often talk about the importance of parent engagement in schools but they have provided very limited opportunities for us to develop the knowledge and skills we require to do that part of our jobs better.			48.8	
4. My school system provides us with very helpful opportunities to acquire the insights and skills we need to productively engage our parents in school.			18.9	
b. your district's efforts to help teachers and administrators develop the capacities they need to assist parents in creating <i>conditions in the home</i> which support the success of their children at school.				
1. We are expected to figure this out for ourselves.			6.4	
2. My board has provided some help in the past but no such help has been provided in the past year.			38.6	
3. Central office staff often talk about the importance of helping parents create such conditions in the home but they have provided very limited opportunities for us to develop the knowledge and skills we require to do that part of our jobs better.			38.1	
4. My school system provides us with very helpful opportunities to acquire the insights and skills we need to productively assist our parents in creating conditions at home for supporting the success of their children at school.			7.2	
c. how your district holds schools accountable for productively engaging parents.				
1. My school system makes no effort to hold schools accountable for parent engagement.			6.4	

2. My school system's efforts are limited to occasional encouragement and informal questions from some district staff about what we are doing in my school.			38.6	
3. The performance appraisal of principals in my school system includes assessment of the nature and success of their school's parent engagement strategies.			38.1	
4. In addition to being part of our principal appraisal system, our school system has a formal policy on parent engagement and conducts periodic audits across the schools about the extent to which that policy is being implemented. School staffs and parents are asked for evidence as part of these audits			7.2	
d. How extensive is your school system's efforts - <i>independent of what schools do</i> - to provide programs and other opportunities aimed at helping parents ensure the success of their children at school? (1 = Schools initiate all parent engagement; 4 = System's efforts quite extensive)			2.47	0.79
<b>Relationships with Local Community Groups</b> the nature of your school system's ties with local community groups				
1. Potential contributions of community groups are unrecognized and these groups have no involvement in the school system.			1.9	
2. Potential contributions of community groups are sporadically recognized, as are consultations with these groups and their involvement in school system decisions.			30.8	
3. Community groups are often recognized for their contribution and support; they are consulted on many decisions affecting the community. School system staff are often members of these groups, themselves.			44.2	
4. Community groups are routinely recognized for their contribution and support and consulted on almost all decisions affecting the community. School system staff are regularly members of these groups themselves.			13.4	
<b>Ministry of Education Relations</b>				
<i>To what extent do you agree that the following statements describe your school district's relationship with the Ministry of Education: (1 = Strongly disagree; 4 = Strongly agree)</i>				
Aggregate (All items in scale)			<b>3.08</b>	<b>0.76</b>
a. My district communicates regularly with the Ministry, both formally and informally, about board goals and directions;			3.23	0.68
b. My district clarifies with the Ministry how it can be of most help to the board;			3.02	0.72

c. My district encourages Ministry collaboration in achieving board goals and directions;			3.09	0.73
d. My district provides feedback to the Ministry about the relevance of its initiatives to board goals and directions.			3.14	0.76
<i>Which one of the following statements best describes</i>			% of Ratings Ontario	
e. how your school system typically responds to the province's initiatives				
1. Central office staff and some school staff are made aware of new provincial initiatives.			2.6	
2. Central office staff share information about provincial initiatives with principals and principals relay this information to their teaching colleagues.			26.0	
3. Principals are assigned responsibility for implementing provincial initiatives. Procedures are established for schools to gain access to the resources they require for implementation.			32.5	
4. The province's initiatives are awarded priority in the district, systematic analysis of changes required in the district are carried out, and progress toward implementing these initiatives is reported regularly (e.g., at principals' meetings).			28.5	
f. your system's current approach to supplementing government initiatives in order to increase their local impact				
1. There are no clear links between provincial initiatives and activities in schools.			1.6	
2. Personnel are assigned responsibility for implementing provincial initiatives and discussions are held about what implementation might consist of in schools.			37.9	
3. The school allocates the resources (time, money, expertise) required to build the capacities staff need to implement provincial initiatives effectively.			37.9	
4. Problem-solving groups in schools consider how to implement provincial initiatives in order to get the best results for the school and its students.			12.2	
g. your district's attempt to leverage the province's initiatives in the interest of the board's priorities				
1. There has been little or no effort to integrate board and provincial priorities.			1.1	
2. District staff has recently indicated the need for efforts to integrate board and provincial priorities.			16.3	
3. A process is now underway for the first time to determine how to integrate provincial and district priorities.			17.3	
4. The district has a multi-year plan that explicitly integrates provincial and district priorities.			54.8	

## Reflections By: Dr. Kenneth Leithwood \*

### Comprehensive Approaches to Leadership Development

One of the things that struck me most was the alignment of the work being done on leadership development by the districts featured in 2017 and the results of relevant research. More specifically, the three 2017 districts had been working systematically at their own comprehensive approaches to leadership development for periods ranging from two years to twenty years.

In these three case studies, significant attention had been given to recruitment of new school leaders, including “tapping on the shoulder” strategies, opportunities for realistic but low risk leadership experiences, and formal programs for aspiring leaders. Networks were valued sources of leadership development in all three cases. Succession planning was clearly front of mind, especially in those districts with significant numbers of school leaders due to retire.<sup>3</sup> Less evident in the cases was information about school leader appraisal. There was not much talk about this on the part of others at the session either.

A focus within some leadership development programs was on the operational skills needed to run a school efficiently. Good evidence indicates that such skills on the part of school leaders can contribute as much to student success as skills more typically associated with leadership. And some of the reasons for this not hard to discern. It is virtually impossible to be effective at improving one’s school if school operations and procedures are not effective and if they are carried out in an inefficient manner. Efficient management of operations saves time, which can then be devoted to the more complex leadership tasks likely to move the school forward.

There was considerable discussion about the importance of school leaders and teachers reflecting the cultural diversity of the students and families they serve. This discussion was about the inadequate state of many districts, at present, as well as both the sources of the problem and some possible solutions. Schools and districts serving communities with rapidly increasing diversity will need to be especially intentional about solving this problem during hiring, transfer, and promotion processes. But solving the problem through hiring, promotions and transfers will take a considerable period of time, and this solution will barely scratch the surface of the problem in the short run. There was some agreement that leadership development programs were one of the few levers available to a district to increase the cultural competence of their leaders. Cultural competence emerged

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<sup>3</sup> For a useful perspective on teachers’ pathways to the principalship, see the recent review by Davis, B., Gooden, M., Bowers, A. (2017). Pathways to the principalship: An event history analysis of the careers of teachers with principal certification, *Review of Educational Research*, 54, 2, 207-240.



as a critical focus for the early and ongoing professional development of school leaders.<sup>4</sup>

Some preliminary results of the current Strong Districts and Their Leadership research were summarized. Among the twelve school-level variables measured by this study, the impact of many exceeded, by a significant margin, the impact of classroom instruction as it was measured. This result, it was pointed out, is consistent with other recently collected bodies of evidence calling into question my often-quoted assertion to the effect that leadership is second only to classroom instruction as a school-based source of influence on student learning. In fact, evidence from the current Strong Districts and Their Leadership study does support this assertion about leadership. But it does not reflect this assertion about classroom instruction. Many school conditions appear to contribute more to student learning than classroom instruction as it was measured in that study. These more powerful conditions include, for example, Academic Emphasis, Disciplinary Climate, Teacher Trust in Others, Collective Teacher Efficacy and a Safe and Orderly Environment.

If classroom instruction is a less dominant school condition than we have thought for many years, continuing to use the phrase “Instructional Leadership” as a label for effective leadership would seem to be seriously out of date. The growing attraction of the phrase Leadership for Learning is likely a better label to capture our meaning of effective school leadership. Indeed, the OLF is best described as a *Leadership for Learning* model since it rests on a foundation of evidence about whatever leadership capacities and personal leadership resources have been found to influence student learning.

One of the issues that neither of the three cases nor our subsequent discussions had time to examine in much detail was the actual content or specific objectives of the leadership experiences and programs we heard described. Most of these programs were connected, one way or another, to OLF practices and/or personal leadership resources. I want to make a connection between such content and the design of the recent Strong Districts and Their Leadership research that was summarized at the end of our session. This research included, as mediating variables between what districts do and what students learn, twelve (12) school conditions, among them the examples mentioned above. These conditions were selected for inclusion in the research because of the substantial amounts of prior research linking them with significant influences on student learning and evidence that they were relatively malleable by school leaders. If they are the leadership-sensitive conditions in schools with the most powerful effects on students, it follows that learning how to improve the status of those conditions should be a key part of a district’s leadership program. The twelve (12) conditions encompass and extend the “domain-specific

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<sup>4</sup> A recent synthesis of research on this issue can be found in Khalifa, m., Gooden, M., Davis, J., (2016). Culturally responsive school leadership: A synthesis of the literature, Review of Educational Research, 86, 4, 1272-1311.



knowledge” needed by school-level leaders now outlined among the cognitive personal leadership resources of the OLF.

One of the three case districts alluded to its program for Secondary School leadership development. This prompted me to consider how rare it is to see acknowledgement of this distinction in most of the programs for leadership development in the province—or elsewhere—of which I am aware. Yet most people close to the work of elementary and secondary principal know that, while some aspects of the two positions are similar, much of consequence is different. This is part of what I think is a much larger issue in our K-12 culture, the extent to which we undervalue and fail to take advantage of specialized, deep expertise. It is not uncommon for superintendents with secondary school leadership backgrounds to be appointed to supervise elementary schools, for example.

Absent other compelling, mitigating circumstances (and I acknowledge that such circumstances do exist), this does seem to squander the specialized knowledge and skill of these senior leaders. So, arguments about the value of “learning across the panels” need to take into account the value that specialized expertise and experience add to the organization.

## Self-assessment

*In order to assist you with your learning, use a rating scale in response to the following:*

*(1 = not at all, 2 = a modest amount, 3 = significantly, 4 = a great deal)*

Please indicate the extent to which you feel that participation in this module has extended your ability, or increased your awareness of the need, to address the following challenges associated with your district’s overall approach to leadership development:

1. Well-designed and carefully implemented procedures are included for identifying, recruiting, selecting and appraising school-level leaders
2. Procedures are implemented for transferring school-level leaders that does no harm and, whenever possible, adds value to improvement efforts underway in schools
3. The most skilled leaders in the system are placed where they are most needed.
4. School-level leaders, when useful, are encouraged to supplement their own capacities with system-level expertise
5. System leaders expect principals to be knowledgeable about the quality of their teachers’ instruction. This is a central criterion for selecting school leaders and for their performance appraisal

Both system- and school-level leaders are expected to reflect on the leadership practices and personal leadership resources identified in the *Ontario Leadership Framework*, as well as such other practices as might be deemed critical for local board purposes

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### Evaluation du module

1. If your participation in this module has caused you to consider doing something different in your own system, please describe what that is.
2. Please identify any changes or refinements that could be made to this module that would improve participants' learning.
3. How can this work best be used with others in the future?

**The Institute for Education Leadership (IEL) invites you to share your responses to the above questions with the coordinator of the IEL at [communication@education-leadership-ontario.ca](mailto:communication@education-leadership-ontario.ca).**