Preparing for the Vice-Principal Selection Process

Take Hold of Your Future

Fall, 2010

York *Region*
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

MISSION

VISION

VALUES

We unite in our purpose to inspire and prepare learners for life in our changing world community.

We are the faces of public education. We understand our gifts and challenges. We are motivated by our dreams and act towards their fulfillment. We respect and celebrate our differences. We invite and value the spirit of community, creativity, and personal growth. We support each other. We have joy in who we are and who we are becoming.

- We recognize and celebrate excellence, and the heart-felt efforts and contributions of our community.

- We strive for equity, inclusiveness, and diversity in all our programs, practices, facilities, and people.

- We value dedication and commitment.

- We value and will respond in an appropriate manner to the voices, ideas, and understanding of all our community members.

- We believe it is the right and responsibility of everyone to ensure a safe nurturing community.

- We embrace the spirit of innovation that acts to realize opportunities to transform our vision into reality.

- We are all responsible for our words and actions.

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Colleagues:

Congratulations on aspiring to become a member of the dynamic leadership team of principals and vice-principals of the York Region District School Board!

Your decision to apply for this new leadership role demonstrates your commitment to work collaboratively with trustees, superintendents, teachers, parents and support staff to ensure the success of all students in a diverse and changing world community. It is also a commitment to engage in reflective practice and professional growth so that you can provide effective school leadership in a decade of rapid change, increasing diversity, and phenomenal expansion.

YRDSB believes that effective principals and vice-principals are pivotal in building a school system with high standards for student achievement. Our board prepares for its future by identifying and selecting potential leaders both from inside and outside its borders, and by providing extensive professional development and resources to support these leaders as they articulate the values and develop the skills necessary to meet the new leadership challenges of the twenty-first century.

One of the resources, *Leadership Competencies*, outlines research-based leadership practices which are proven to be effective in improving student achievement. This document also outlines *Dimensions of Leadership* which are required of successful leaders regardless of the context in which they are placed. *Leadership Competencies* provides a foundation of shared understanding with regard to effective school leadership for all stakeholders in the system, a shared understanding that is particularly relevant as the board develops and nurtures its future leaders. The school leadership cadre of YRDSB is expected to increase by at least five hundred new principals and vice principals over the next fifteen years.

As you reflect upon the selection process and your own suitability for leadership, I encourage you to read *Preparing for the Vice-Principal Selection Process* and reflect upon its contents. It has been written by your professional colleagues and is intended to assist you in your preparation for your new position as vice-principal with the YRDSB. And I thank you for starting a journey which I believe will be rewarding for you professionally and may ultimately be important for our students as they become successful lifelong learners in our changing world community.

Sincerely,

Ken Thurston

Director of Education

York Region District School Board

January, 2010

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1. Introduction

Preparing for the Vice-Principal Selection Process is intended to provide encouragement and help to applicants, as they prepare for and engage in the selection process, for Vice-Principal positions in YRDSB.

This handbook includes advice from a group of experienced principals and vice-principals who have engaged in the selection process and used the leadership practices found in *Leadership Competencies* to reflect upon their own leadership and guide their own professional growth.

In its complexity and length, *Preparing for the Vice-Principal Selection Process* may appear daunting at first glance. To facilitate its use, it is organized according to the selection process and includes the following sections that can assist applicants in meeting its expectations:

- a leadership self-assessment and reflection tool
- advice on designing a résumé and writing a covering letter
- suggestions for preparing for the interview and the practicum presentation
- mock interview questions and frameworks for shaping responses
- tips for gathering feedback, whatever the outcome of the selection process

The document may be used in part or in whole and returned to at different stages of the selection process depending upon the needs and experience of applicants.

Applicants for vice-principal positions are encouraged to visit the YRDSB website at www.yrdsb.edu.on.ca in order to view the timelines of the selection process and to apply on-line for a leadership position in YRDSB schools. Each year the short and long-term needs of the system necessitate changes in the timing of the selection process and the number of leadership positions available.

2. Preparing for the Vice-Principal Selection Process

It is important to take the time to prepare for the selection process well in advance of the application. While making the decision to apply for a position as a vice-principal, applicants should seek the support of a current or recent principal and superintendent who can support them as they move through the selection process. Applicants should ensure that they can provide a recent performance appraisal that describes their competencies and should have current and appropriate résumés and covering letters.

We believe that successful applicants know the mission, vision and values of YRDSB and its priorities. They can articulate their personal philosophies of education, and describe their roles in supporting student achievement. They are knowledgeable about Board documents, recent trends in education, their school's improvement plan (SPCI), issues and priorities as outlined in the system plan, and the portfolios and responsibilities of each of the superintendents of YRDSB which are

based on the Board's Plan for Continuous Improvement.

Prepared applicants will have reflected upon how they would address the board priorities and is-sues that arise in the role of vice-principal. Those preparing for the process are encouraged to search the board website for pertinent information (for example, the Director's speech).

Interested applicants have assessed whether they are personally and professionally ready for the selection process and the role of vice-principal. They can discuss their leadership practices within the framework of the *Leadership Competencies* document and can support that discussion with evi-dence from their professional careers.

Applicants will have demonstrated their commitment to preparing for the role by practicing oral and written responses with colleagues, mentors, or friends, and/or participating in study groups where they have received both honest feedback and suggestions regarding their professional growth.

> **Although the following preparatory tools are not required as part of the vice-principal selection process, many applicants find them valuable for their own personal reflection and growth.**

Professional Portfolios

Professional portfolios are not used as part of the Vice-Principal Selection Process in YRDSB. However, portfolios are "purposeful collections of work which exhibit efforts and achievements in one or more areas over an extended period of time". They are both reflective professional development tools and organized, goal-driven documentations of professional growth. While portfolios have been used extensively with students over the last decade, teachers and school leaders are increasingly using them to reflect on their own professional learning and document their own professional growth.

Portfolios invite leaders and potential leaders to evaluate their professional practice, capture their strengths and document their individual careers. The portfolios also provide a focal point for dis-cussions with peers, principals, and superintendents about individual commitment, strengths and creativity. They provide:

- authentic documentation of professional competence, creativity, organization and skill
- on-going self-assessment and feedback
- an enhanced résumé for career development or advancement
- visible evidence of teaching and learning gains the attention of the reader
- indications of increased awareness of strengths and areas for growth

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- proof of enhanced self-confidence
- a basis for goal-setting
- an opportunity for dialogue with peers, references and supervisors.

Leadership Readiness Tool

The *Leadership Competencies Self Assessment and Reflection Tool* describes research-based leadership practices which are effective in improving student achievement. Applicants are invited to use this tool with their principal to identify their leadership strengths and areas for future growth.

The *Leadership Competencies Self Assessment and Reflection Tool* is available from the Leadership Development Team and on the Board portal.

3. The Application Process

Mission Statement

We unite in our purpose to inspire and prepare learners for life in our changing world community.

Selection Process for Vice-Principals

The selection of vice-principals is based on the following four research-based areas of leadership practice which are effective in improving student achievement, as outlined in the *Leadership Competencies* document:

1. Setting Direction and Sustaining the Vision
2. Building Relationships
3. Leading and Managing Instruction
4. Further Developing the Organization

Framework for the Selection Process

Each year, the Board determines the hiring needs for school administrators. Internal candidates are encouraged to look for the Board communication to familiarize themselves with the selection process in place each year. External candidates are encouraged to visit the Board's website at www.yrdsb.edu.on.ca for up-to-date information regarding our selection processes and timelines.

4. Covering Letters

Covering letters are application letters that accompany résumés. They provide introductions to applicants as professional learners and potential leaders by highlighting their leadership competencies and suitability for the position of vice-principal. Exemplary covering letters:

- indicate what is unique about the applicant that adds value to the position for which he/she is applying
- highlight key experiences that have shaped their growth as leaders and prepared them for this position, without repeating information already present in the resume
- include a closing statement that expresses their enthusiasm, and communicates a sense of confidence in their abilities
- are brief, succinct, balanced and persuasive
- contain no errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation

5. Résumés

Résumés provide ample evidence that the qualifications and experience of applicants make them viable for the position of vice-principal. Effective résumés contain information that is relevant to the position sought, list the information under appropriate headings in point form, and include items that are current. Applicants will be asked to submit their résumés on-line as part of their application and must follow the standardized format.

Within two pages they will include the following information in this order:

- Personal information: name, address, phone number, email address
- Educational background
- Teaching experience
- describe and provide evidence of administrative and/or leadership experience under the headings of the four areas of the *Leadership Competencies*
    - ° Setting Direction and Sustaining the Vision
    - ° Building Relationships
    - ° Leading and Managing Instruction
    - ° Further Developing the Organization
- list other related experience, if that experience is professionally significant;
- ensure résumé is free of errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation.

6. Referees

Selecting Referees

Successful applicants select referees who have known them for some time and who can provide strong oral and written support for their applications. It is customary for applicants to select:

- your current superintendent
- the principal with whom they are currently working
- one other person (e.g. Superintendent or principal) who has supervised him/her in the past for at least one school year

In selecting the third referee, applicants for a vice-principal's position have some flexibility. They frequently choose from a wide variety of professional colleagues:

- a principal with whom they have worked in the recent past
- an administrator in another school or board with whom they have worked
- a current vice-principal

What to Ask Referees

Successful applicants are never surprised by the nature of the comments that referees make in support of their application, or by the level of support they provide. They arrange interviews with those whom they have asked to act as referees in order to discuss their leadership roles and responsibilities and seek feedback on their leadership competencies. It is suggested that the applicant provide a copy of the resume to the referee. In the event that an applicant's superintendent has been recently appointed and may not know the applicant, it is the applicants responsibility to arrange for a superintendent, familiar with the applicant's leadership, to contact the existing superintendent.

In meeting with the superintendent, applicants may ask questions such as:

- Do you think that I am ready to take on the role for which I am applying?
- How would you rate my readiness based on other applicants you know?
- What leadership competencies do you see as my strengths? Areas requiring growth?
- Do you have any questions about my leadership roles and responsibilities?
- What steps should I be considering to enhance my less-developed competencies?
- Do you have any specific advice for me as I engage in the selection process?

What the Referees Will Be Asked about Applicants

Applicants can be certain that their referees will be asked specific questions. The following is a sample of the types of questions referees may be asked:

- How long have you worked with this candidate and in what capacity?
- How has the candidate been involved in the school with respect to school improvement and student achievement? Please give examples.
- How does the candidate use data to support student achievement?
- Describe how the candidate builds relationships in the schools.
- How does the candidate handle/mediate conflict in the school?
- What is the candidate's commitment to and involvement in learning communities and net works within the school and board?
- What additional growth opportunities does this candidate require?
- Would you want this individual as your Vice-principal?

Successful applicants know how their referees will respond to questions of this type because they have sought direct and honest answers to them in their own interviews and are aware that critical responses at the early stage of the selection process may help them to identify areas for future professional growth.

7. Written Submission

In order to demonstrate skills in written communication, applicants are required to make a written submission to a question that is provided. The submission should reflect the applicant's experiences with respect to the four competencies in the *Leadership Competencies* document with evidence provided. Written submissions are generally about 750 words long; however requirements may change from year to year. Applicants are asked to follow the specific guidelines identified in the posting.

8. Teacher Performance Appraisal Summative Report

Applicants need to submit a copy of the most recent Teacher Performance Appraisal Summative report. Internal candidates whose most recent Summative Report was done through mVal do not need to submit a hard copy as the Report is available within existing Board records.

9. Vice-Principal Practicum and Presentation

Elementary:

Successful practicum presentations highlight the applicant's ability in leading change and empowering others for continuous school improvement**,** impacting teacher practice and student learning. Practicum presentations should focus on the candidates leadership initiative aligned to the school's SPCI with literacy being the overall priority.

The members of the selection team (2-3 members) will be looking for evidence of the candidate's leadership competencies in the four areas of:
- Setting Direction and sustaining the vision
- Building relationships
- Leading and managing Instruction
- Further Develops the Organization

The practicum consists of a:
- 40 minute presentation
- 20 minute follow up question and answer period
- Written assignment using computer technology

The practicum should include one or more of the following aspects of the SPCI:

1. **Curriculum and Student Achievement**
   Ensuring that all students are engaged in their learning and in acquisition of their literacy skills

2. **Parental and Community Engagement**
   Enhancing family engagement and community support for student learning including the acquisition of students' literacy skills

3. Effective Schools
Ensuring continuous improvement in the development, implementation and delivery of programs and processes

The candidate may use any format, techniques or resources deemed to be appropriate for the presentation. A summary handout of the presentation should be provided to the selection team at the time of the practicum.

Important Aspects of the Practicum

Demonstrates the candidate's leadership in supporting the School Plan for Continuous Improvement through:
- Focusing on a specific area of improvement
- Showing work over an extended period of time
- Using student data to inform decisions
- Building and working effectively with a team
- Identifying successes, challenges and next steps
- Using monitoring processes to assess impact of the work

Following the presentation there will be a 20 minute 'Question and Answer' session in which members of the selection committee will probe candidates in regard to leadership initiative.

At the culmination of the practicum presentation and 'Question and Answer' period, applicants are provided with a written assignment to complete within a given timeframe. Applicants are required to use computer technology for this assignment. While the applicant is completing the assignment, the practicum team will meet with the applicant's principal or immediate supervisor to discuss and verify the content of the practicum (internal candidates only). Applicants for elementary vice principal positions, who are successful at the practicum stage, will progress to the final interview stage of the process.

Internal applicants will present their practica at their schools; external applicants make their presentations as part of an extended interview at an assigned YRDSB site.

Secondary:

The secondary vice-principal selection process replicates that of the elementary selection process, except for the practicum. The secondary vice-principal practicum occurs at the Secondary Education Centre and has two components - verbal and written.

For the verbal component, applicants will respond in a role play as a vice-principal. This part of the practicum is designed to assess candidates' problem solving abilities, leadership qualities, and/or conflict resolution skills. This will be followed by a reflective interview based on the role play. The written part of the practicum requires candidates to complete a small piece of writing as a follow-up to the role play experience, which is intended to allow the candidate to demonstrate the communication skills required of a vice-principal.

Applicants for secondary vice-principal positions who progress to the practicum stage, will automatically progress to the final interview stage of the process.

10. Interviews

The interview will consist of five questions and will take approximately one half hour. The interview team will be made up of two practicing principals and one supervisory officer. Candidates will be invited to arrive for their interview, twenty minutes prior to meeting the interview team. They will receive the first question upon arrival and will have the opportunity to prepare a response prior to the interview. It is not appropriate to bring notes or other printed material to the interview. The only written materials that can be brought into the interview are the notes made immediately prior to the interview that will assist with the first response. Applicants will have the opportunity to conclude the interview with closing remarks.

In their responses to questions successful applicants:

- draw upon their own leadership experiences to provide examples
- include sufficient details to answer questions well
- refer to board policies and procedures and board priorities
- frame their responses, when appropriate, around the School Improvement Plan for Student Achievement (SIP) and the Board Improvement Work Plan for Student Achievement (BIP)

Using Frameworks to Respond to Questions

A helpful way to prepare for the interview stage of the selection process is to develop and practice using frameworks as a way to structure responses. There are many different ways to respond and the applicants must utilize frameworks that work for them. However, the following section offers some frameworks that have been used successfully by current administrators.

During the interview process it is not unusual for candidates to be given prompts and/or follow-up questions.

When responding to questions whether in written or in oral form, frameworks facilitate analysis, provide organization and ensure that responses have both breadth and depth. They provide sequential structures within which to:

- complete a situational analysis
- communicate with both internal and external stakeholders
- develop a plan of action
- complete a potential problem analysis
- organize resources
- implement an initiative
- engage in action, and
- monitor the results

The following are examples of frameworks that may be helpful for responding to interview questions:

Implementing Change (ASPIRE)

Analyze	Analyze school culture/climate/needs. Assess the extent to which the staff is ready for change. Use school and system data to analyze the gap between the ideal and the status quo. Involve appropriate stakeholders in the assessment process.
Strategize	Collaboratively examine current information/data, (e.g. gap analysis data) and develop a rationale for the change. Ensure that the change is incorporated into the SPCI process.
Plan	Establish a representative committee of internal stakeholders to create an action plan. Keep the committee small but ensure that it includes influential staff members and representative students, but make it clear that they will engage with other staff
Implement	Share the action plan with staff, School Council, students, and implement it stage by stage.
Review	Establish a review committee once the timelines have been met. Review the progress of the implementation. Gather data on the effectiveness of the implementation. Identify challenges and discuss strategies for addressing them.
Evaluate	Collaborate with the committee to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation. Determine next steps to ensure that change has become institutionalized.

Solving Problems and Resolving Issues

Identify the problem or the issue.	Define the problem or issue briefly, and articulate why it is important.
Investigate the problem or the issue.	Identify the major internal and external stakeholders. Gather information about the problem from those involved. Identify causes and effects.
Evaluate the problem or the issue.	Describe the desired outcomes. Consider possible solutions to the problem or ways of resolving the issue. Where appropriate, consult with stakeholders regarding the possible solutions.
Make a decision and develop a plan of action.	Determine the best solution to the problem or means of resolving the issue. Determine a sequential plan of action and share it with stakeholders.
Implement a Plan of Action.	Keep all stakeholders informed as the plan of action is being implemented, and seek input on any additional actions that need to be taken.
Monitor the results.	Monitor immediate, short-term, and long-term outcomes of the resolution. Consider the impact of the implementation on all stakeholders.

Addressing Conflict	
Identify the conflict.	Identify the conflict to be resolved, and determine whether it is one problem or a series of issues that need to be dealt with.
Describe the desired outcome.	What would things look like if the problem were resolved? What result do you want at the end of the process?
Analyze the situation and engage those who are in conflict.	Ask those who are in conflict to describe the issues within the conflict. Use their input as a basis for discussion and resolution. Facilitate dialogue in which those in conflict discuss how they might describe the conflict to outsiders, how outsiders might perceive the conflict, how people are affected, what the most damaging aspects of the conflict are, what obstacles prevent resolution of the conflict, and how they personally contribute to the conflict. If the conflict consists of a series of issues, identify them, seek agreement on the issues, and decide which will be dealt with first.
Identify potential solutions.	Brainstorm with those involved to generate a list of potential solutions to the problems, or resolution of the conflict.
Evaluate the potential solutions.	Use a graphic organizer such as an Impact/Effort Grid to sift through the brainstormed solutions to determine which solution is feasible and most appropriate.
Plan for action.	Create a detailed action plan for items that need to be implemented. Make sure the action plan consists of a sequence of steps. Provide details about what will be done, how and by whom. Establish target dates for completion. Identify performance indicators that will tell you that you achieved resolution.
Complete a potential problem analysis.	Identify potential obstacles in implementing the plan. Create strategies to resolve potential problems. Consider complex or sensitive aspects of the plan, any potential shifts in priority, organizational challenges, technical problems, lack of resources, staff commitment, and capacity of team members to fulfill responsibilities.
Monitor and evaluate the results.	Identify how progress will be reported, the timing of reports, which stakeholders to consult/inform/involve, how results will be monitored, and who will take responsibility for the plan.

Sample Questions

Interview questions in the vice-principal selection process interviews include two types of questions:
(1) scenario type questions that often begin with… "You are the vice-principal…." or
(2) behaviour/reference type questions that often begin with… "Tell us about a time when….".
The questions below are not exhaustive; however, they are examples of the types of multi-layered interview questions that are often asked in the promotion process. Applicants are encouraged to brainstorm additional questions and to use the frameworks provided in this resource to practice responses.

Setting Direction and Maintaining the Vision
- You are leading the School Planning Team in creating a focus and implementation plan for your new school plan for continuous improvement. How would you begin this process?
- How can you use data to guide and support your school's literacy program?
- How will you ensure that all grade 10 students are prepared to write the OSSLT?
- How would you implement a new initiative that the school planning committee feels is essential to improving student achievement, in a context in which the staff is resistant to change?

Building Relationships
- You are new to you role as vice-principal and are appointed in January. How would you go about developing a relationship with your staff members?
- A teacher on your staff is very negative and consistently tries to undermine your efforts/initiatives to improve student learning. What will you do?
- With recent media attention focused on intruders in our schools, what will you do to ensure the staff and students in your school are safe?
- The members of your School Council are not representative of the student population. How will you tap into the voices of parents/guardians/families which are not typically heard in your school?
- You receive a telephone call from a storeowner at a local mall telling you that students from your school have been there over lunch hour. The storeowner says your students have been rowdy and have vandalized property in the mall. Describe what you would do in response to this telephone call.

Leading and Managing Instruction
- What steps will you take to involve parents/guardians and families in your community in supporting the school's efforts to improve student literacy?
- Describe what you will see and hear in a classroom in which student engagement in meaningful learning is prevalent?
- You are placed in a school in which staff do not collaborate and are isolated. What steps would you take to develop a Professional Learning Community?

Further Developing the Organization
- What strategies would you use to develop the leadership potential of your staff?
- You have been assigned to a school with rapidly growing population of special education Identified students. Staff are inconsistent in their understanding of learning diversity, and in their instructional and assessment/evaluation approaches to meet the needs of all students.

How would you foster greater consistency among the teachers in meeting the learning needs of all students?

- You have received a phone call from a parent whose child is seriously allergic to scent. The parent requests your support in ensuring the school environment is scent-free. How will you address the parent's concern?

11. Suggested Resources

Books:

Carothers, J. and Dyer, K. (2000) *The Intuitive Principal*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press, Inc.

Castleberry, M. and Wald, P. (2000) *Educators as Learners: Creating a Professional Learning Community in Your School*. Alexandria: Association For Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Cotton, K. (2003) *Principals and Student Achievement: What the Research Says.* Alexandria: Association For Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Donaldson, G.A. (2001) *Cultivating Leadership in Schools: Connecting People, Purpose and Practice*. New York: Teachers College Press

Fullan, M. (2001) *Leading in a Culture of Change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Fullan, M. (2003) *The Moral Imperative of School Leadership*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press, Inc. and Ontario Principals' Council.

Glanz, J. *(2002) Finding Your Leadership Style*. Alexandria: Association For Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Glickman, C.D. (2002) *Leadership for earning: How to Help Teachers Succeed*. Alexandria: Association For Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Heller, D. (2004) *Teachers Wanted: Attracting and Retaining Good Teachers*. Alexandria: Association For Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Kline, E., Kuklis, R. and Zmuda, A. (2004) *Transforming Schools: Creating Culture of Continuous Improvement.* Alexandria: Association For Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Lambert, L. (2003) *Leadership Capacity for Lasting School Improvement*. Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Richetti, C.T. and Tregoe, B. (2001) *Analytic Processes for School Leaders*. Alexandria: Association For Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Roher, E. and Wormwell, S.A. (2000) *An Educator's Guide to the Role of the Principal.* Aurora: Aurora Prof

Schumaker, D. and Sommers, W. (2001) *Being a Successful Principal: Riding the Wave of Change Without Drowning.* Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press, Inc.

York Region District School Board, (2006) *Leadership Competencies*

12. Other Resources:

York Region District School Board (www.yrdsb.edu.on.ca)

Ministry of Education (www.edu.gov.on.ca)

Proquest (www.proquest.com/proquest)

York Region District School Board Policies and Procedures

OUR COMMITMENT

To support the development of leadership capacity within our learning organization that cultivates excellence, innovation, creativity and commitment through quality professional learning that is:

- ✓ informed by research
- ✓ aligned with our Board Plan for Continuous Improvement
- ✓ culturally proficient
- ✓ engaging and promotes collaboration
- ✓ inspiring and forward thinking
- ✓ technologically integrated
- ✓ focused on building knowledge and skills
- ✓ responsive and connected to our changing local and global community