

# The Interdependence of Principal School Leadership and Student Achievement

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## Abstract

This review illuminated principal school leadership as a variable that impacted achievement. The principal as school leader and manager was explored because these roles were thought to impact student achievement both directly and indirectly. Specific principal leadership behaviors and principal effectiveness were explored as variables potentially impacting both teachers and student achievement. Leadership was considered a variable that could improve teacher efficacy although it could also diminish this capacity when school leadership was ineffective.

## Introduction

Over 10 years ago, a leading scholar who wrote extensively about school leadership suggested, “a school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community” (Fullan, 2001, p. 50). This statement at the time clearly placed a weight on the shoulders of all school leaders. Yet, before this statement surfaced, school leaders were well aware that they had to “promote the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and

resources for a safe, efficient and effective learning environment” (Fullan, 2001, p. 50). Facilitation of learning is not a small task for educators and dysfunctional leadership may impair learning.

The person in the office of principal needed to be “an educational leader who promoted the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth” (Fullan, 2001, p. 50). The quotes were powerful, and implicit was the sheer breadth and depth of the related tasks that underpinned these responsibilities which can be overwhelming for educators who try to respond.

Leaping forward to the present we became aware of other seminal leadership researchers and scholars who recently explained:

In developing a starting point for this six-year study, we claimed, based on a preliminary review of research, that leadership is second only to classroom instruction as an influence on student learning, after six additional years of research, we are even more confident about this claim. To date we have not found a single case of a school improving its student achievement record in the absence of talented leadership. (Seashore Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010, p. 9)

The importance and impact of principal leadership on student achievement was evident as other researchers have suggested, “principals who consistently communicate expectations for high performance, demonstrate that this constant expression of their philosophy is linked step for step to positive results in school and student achievement” (Nettles & Herrington, 2007, p. 3). Achievement is not easy to define or measure. However, we turn to practicing educators within one Ontario (Canadian) Board of Education to learn that “achievement can be understood as a student’s learning of curriculum expectations demonstrated at a given time” (Toronto Catholic District School Board, 2005, p. 66). We argue, achievement can be impacted by many internal and external factors such as student health, work ethic, and reluctantly we admit, “socioeconomic status is out of the control of the school system” (McGuigan & Hoy, 2006, p. 2). This last variable is important in any analysis of achievement since “the influence of parents and students is significantly related to student achievement. This result may reflect the well-known effects of student SES on achievement” (Seashore Louis et al., 2010, p. 32). Nonetheless, we believe herein that elements within a school such as faculty efficacy, faculty trust in students, parent involvement, and the school’s academic emphasis can be affected by the actions of the principal and other school leaders, which in turn may counteract external influences somewhat and therefore impact student achievement. Leadership and achievement continue to be critical coexisting variables within a diverse educational landscape that ignites intense debate and interest in those concerned.

## Background

It has been suggested that leadership is comprised of three dimensions: the heart, the head, and the hand; the heart of leadership pertains to what the person believes, values, dreams about and, is committed to; it is the person's personal vision (Sergiovanni, 2005, p. 25). Leadership requires action and strategies that emanate from our personal vision, experience, and reflective abilities. We may believe, "the hand of leadership has to do with the actions we take, the decisions we make, the leadership and management behaviours we use as our strategies become institutionalized in the form of school programs, policies, and procedures" (p. 2). Leadership and how it is understood, defined, and enacted make it a very personal undertaking.

For instance, the school principal is accountable for the operations and management of the building, which adds a dimension to the overall burden of leadership; he or she is primarily responsible for the success of all students. Indeed, "... superintendents are holding principals accountable for student achievement" (Kaplan, Owings, & Nunnery, 2005, p. 30). These roles and responsibilities make direct connections difficult; therefore we tend to address leadership as a recipe calling for different ingredients. Seashore Louis et al. (2010) recently concluded, "shared leadership and instructional leadership are important variables, but they are indirectly related to student achievement" (p. 51). To understand this position requires us to delve into both of these leadership ingredients.

Historically, it was easier to speak about leadership as the depth and breadth of this topic was less in years past, than today. For example, Glasman (1984) claimed, "the current call is for the principal to be specifically accountable for the performance of students" (p. 283). It has been our experience this has been the case for many years, hence the clarity of the past may be useful for today's leaders. At the commencement of every new academic school year in September for Ontario students, the Education, Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) situated in Toronto, Ontario (Canada) makes public the previous years' Grade 3 and 6 Primary and Junior provincial assessment outcomes along with the grade 10 Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) results. Superintendents (i.e., a level above the principal) do address these scores with principals and as a result of the scores, goals were established within the regional school board. It continues to be a test driven accountability that narrows the purpose of leadership to something rooted in the past yet packaged as a modern effort to improve students' achievement and education in general.

## Leadership and Democratic Leadership: Finding Meaning

The terms leadership and democratic leadership are such complex multidimensional terms that it is very difficult to pinpoint an exact definition that is agreed upon. To illustrate this point we turned to Stewart (2006) who suggested that

“despite the copious amount of literature on leadership, an agreed upon definition of leadership does not exist” (p. 1). Klinker (2006) similarly noted: “The fact that leadership itself has no commonly accepted definition further contributes to the fuzziness and the problem of defining democratic leadership” (p. 53). Yet some suggest, “leadership is the process of persuasion or example by which an individual (or leadership team) induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers” (Gardner, 2000, p. 3). We do know that leadership touches more than one person and most often involves a group of individuals who are led and motivated to follow the direction of the leader. A current incarnation of leadership has suggested,

Leadership is all about organizational improvement; more specifically, it is about establishing agreed-upon and worthwhile directions for the organization in question, and doing whatever it takes to prod and support people to move in those directions. Our general definition of leadership highlights these points: it is about direction and influence. Stability is the goal of what is often called management. Improvement is the goal of leadership. But both are very important. One of the most serious threats to stability in a school district is frequent turnover in the ranks of superintendents, principals, and vice principals. Instability at the school level often reflects a failure of management at the district level. (Seashore Louis et al., 2010, p. 10)

The need for stability is noted as a desirable trait within an organization where people are within their role for an extended duration of time to establish useful and healthy relationships. We embraced this notion and linked this to the belief that “leaders induced followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations—the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations—of both leaders and followers” (Stewart, 2006, p. 3). Digging deeper into the past we uncovered a succinct definition from Gastil (1994) who suggested,

leadership is an interaction between two or more members of a group that often involves a structuring or restructuring of the situation and the perceptions and expectations of the members. . . . Leadership occurs when one group member modifies the motivation or competencies of others in the group. Any member of the group can exhibit some amount of leadership. . . . (p. 954)

We considered the definitions and concluded that the current definition of leadership seemed to have been built upon earlier notions of leadership which was the expected developmental path when moving forward to better understand and enact leadership. The need to define these terms from the onset was viewed as a critical step in the development of this discussion. Hence we further agreed that democratic leadership should be understood henceforth as “. . . behavior that

influences people in a manner consistent with and/or conducive to basic democratic principles and processes, such as self-determination, inclusiveness, equal participation, and deliberation” (Gastil, 1994, p. 956).

### **Improvement Plans: School and Administration**

The Ontario Supervisory Officers (S.O.s) and the Director of Education for each Board of Education in Ontario are held accountable by the Trustees (i.e., elected community members); likewise principals are held accountable by the S.O.s. What is interesting to note is that “principals are held accountable for student achievement although most studies find that they have no direct effect on it” (Ross & Gray, 2006, p. 798). Gaziel (2007) agreed, pointing out that “. . . principals influence student learning indirectly by developing a school mission that provides an instructional focus for teachers throughout the school, and this creates a school environment that facilitates student learning” (p. 19). These beliefs led us to conclude that student achievement is really a shared concern among administrators and teachers alike within the school environment. Indeed, “a faculty’s collective sense of efficacy that they can promote high levels of academic progress contributes significantly to their school’s level of academic achievement” (Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004, p. 191).

Over the years we have noticed a shift in principals’ attitudes toward leadership as instructional management becomes focussed on student achievement. Currently within many Ontario Boards, there was evidence of principals attending more conferences with teachers and curriculum consultants that pertain to literacy and numeracy initiatives (Ross & Gray, 2006). As a result of this participation, principals were taking very active role sharing and distributing the facilitation opportunities and leadership of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) and the Teaching–Learning Critical Pathway (TLCP). According to the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat Capacity Building Series (2007), a PLC “represents a collective effort to enhance student learning, promotes and sustains the learning of all professionals in the school, builds knowledge through inquiry, and analyses and uses data for reflection and improvement” (p. 1). The (TLCP) was motivated by Fullan, Hill, and Crevola (2006) that drew upon a number of evidence-based practices, including: Setting high expectations for students, using assessment for learning to guide instruction, providing frequent, useful and useable student feedback, and creating effective classroom discussions that elicit evidence of learning. Essentially the belief was that “the quality of the education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers” (Fullan, 2008, p. 23). Teaching Learning Critical Pathways (TLCP) continues to be a “promising model used to organize actions for teaching and student learning” (Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, 2008, p. 1). The fundamental idea of the pathway is that classroom practice can be organized in a practical, precise, and highly personalized fashion for each student, with the ultimate goal being increased student achievement

(Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat Capacity Building Series, 2008, p. 1). The direction of implementation is not the historical top-down model, but rather a team (i.e., group) approach. Teachers were actively involved in decision-making and collaborating with each other and administration. Another consequence of this shift of involvement was the heightened awareness of individual teacher efficacy or the belief that teachers in their own classrooms do make a difference and can influence how well students learned (Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004).

## **The Principal and Student Achievement**

Without a doubt, the principal has an impact on student achievement. Despite the fact the majority of research examined identified principal effect on student achievement as indirect, it remains vital. Nettles and Herrington (2007) explained, “overall, the view that principals have a direct effect on student learning has largely been abandoned and replaced by a focus on the indirect relationships that principals create through their interactions with teachers and the educational environment” (p. 729). Other research from Gaziel (2007) similarly suggested that “principals influence student learning indirectly by developing a school mission that provides an instructional focus for teachers throughout the school, and this creates a school environment that facilitates student learning” (p. 19). Finally, Kaplan et al. (2005) concluded that according to one national investigation of 15 years of research on school leadership, “an outstanding principal ‘exercises a measurable though indirect effect on school effectiveness and student achievement’ “ (p. 29). Klinker (2006) added: “executing democratic leadership within schools is an essential task, although not an easy one” (p. 52). This statement resonates with us because of our experience as administrators. According to Klinker (2006),

democratic leadership then, at its most fundamental level, understands that a leader’s power, no matter whether he or she is defined by the organizational chart as such, or exhibits the skills and strengths defined by the field, or has simply stepped up to assume a leadership position, rests with the sentiment that resides within the people. (p. 54)

Furthermore because of our positions, it is our job to ensure that the learning environment is conducive for both teachers to teach and students to learn. “School leadership’s purpose, at the most fundamental level, is to keep chaos at bay and provide a climate in which all students can learn” (Klinker, 2006, p. 54).

We view diplomacy skills whether interacting with staff, students, or parents as essential. Also, this may include the proper delegation of roles and responsibilities to staff members. However, in our experience, we have witnessed that the practice of delegating has not always been an easy task for some principals simply because it had meant letting go of authority, which made the individual

experience vulnerability in their position. In our view, the issue was a matter of insecurity on the individual's part. In a recent study of leadership, Seashore Louis et al. (2010) found,

while principals pointed out that they frequently delegated instructional leadership to department chairs, teachers did not regard that sort of delegation as a source of instructional leadership. Most teachers described their department chairs as being in charge of the departmental budget; they also said that teacher leaders have a responsibility to attend team-leadership meetings called by the principal. (p. 89)

The question, which remains, is whether the individual has a difficult time relinquishing authority or leadership because of a comfort level, or because an ego and/or title got in the way? This understanding is echoed by Gastil (1994) who suggested, "democratic authorities do not necessarily serve as democratic leaders, and democratic leaders sometimes lack formal authority" (p. 957). Klinker (2006) "sees democratic leadership's priority as cultivating an environment that supports participation, sharing of ideas, and the virtues of honesty, openness, flexibility, and compassion" (pp. 54–55).

Despite the fact that the Gastil article was written 16 years ago, the information presented is still very relevant. For example, Gastil (1994) stated how, "the democratic leader . . . determines *how* the members of the group will think and decide, not *what* they will think and decide . . ." (p. 960). This particular concept was illustrated in the *Five Core Leadership Capacities* issued from the Ontario Leadership Strategy Framework (2010) that included setting goals, aligning resources with priorities, promoting collaborative learning cultures, using data, and engaging in courageous conversations. These five core leadership capacities helped to guide instruction, set school and system goals, and promote a school atmosphere conducive to student learning.

In a democratic environment, specifically a school environment, leadership is behavior, not a position that is shared among all members (Gastil, 1994). Personally, we cannot agree more with this statement because like the old adage says, it takes a village to raise a child and in the school setting effective leadership behavior occurs whenever there is a caring adult working with students regardless of position or title.

## Principal Leadership Behaviors

As noted in most histories of school leadership, the role of the principal has evolved quite considerably and includes a growing active role pertaining to instructional leadership. This role is indirect and second to the classroom teacher. Ballard and Bates (2008) add: ". . . the quality of a teacher in the classroom is the single most important factor in determining how well a child learns" (p. 560). Other

supporting evidence comes from Gaziel (2007) who concluded “principals do not affect the academic achievement of individual students in the same manner that teachers do; that is, through direct classroom instruction” (p. 18). Having said this it seems important to examine peripheral attributes of the principal such as his or her behavior and the impact on instructional leadership. Some 27 years ago Glasman (1984) pointed out that principals in effective schools exhibited leadership behaviors, some of which included, “. . . setting corresponding instructional strategies, providing orderly atmospheres, frequently evaluating student progress, coordinating instructional programs, and supporting teachers” (p. 288). Recent research from Nettles and Herrington (2007) was able to identify seven principal behaviors that define instructional leadership. These included, “making suggestions, giving feedback, modeling effective instruction, soliciting opinions, supporting collaboration, providing professional development opportunities, and giving praise for effective teaching” (p. 725). As the years pass, do we get a better understanding of leadership by making it more complex and multifaceted?

We do see the task of leadership as multi-tasking as Vanderhaar, Munoz, and Rodosky (2006) suggested: “The principal is responsible for informing teachers about new educational strategies, technologies, and other tools that promote effective instruction” (p. 18). Being an involved leader requires many distinct behaviors and constant and ongoing communication with teachers; however, Seashore Louis et al. (2010) suggested,

about the concept of instructional leadership, a clear distinction appeared in our data, suggesting a missing nuance in much of the existing scholarship. It is a distinction between principals who provided support to teachers by—popping in and—being visible as compared with principals who were very intentional about each classroom visit and conversation, with the explicit purpose of engaging with teachers about well-defined instructional ideas and issues. (p. 90)

Being intentional and communicative in a planned manner seems to be important and “schools that make a difference in students’ learning are led by principals who make a significant contribution to the effectiveness of staff and in the learning of pupils in their charge” (Gaziel, 2007, p. 18). There was an overwhelming amount of evidence-based research that supports the fact that principal leadership behavior does impact student achievement in a positive way. In our experience being involved in PLCs and TLCPs, we witnessed firsthand the work teachers do and we were able to hear what supports and resources they may need in order to help facilitate their instruction in the classroom, which ultimately leads to improved student achievement. Being present for PLCs and facilitating TLCPs communicates that the administration has a vested interest in the school and student achievement. Research from O’Donnell and White (2005) concluded: “Principals who strive to be instructional leaders are committed to meeting the

needs of their schools by serving stakeholders and pursuing shared purposes” (p. 57). The key leadership piece occurs when there is a gradual release of responsibility from administration to the teachers. O’Donnell and White (2005) added; “. . . findings suggest that what principals do over time might influence higher student test scores” (p. 64). As this shift in leadership occurs, the teachers take an even greater interest in student learning. Teachers are more aware of the needs of their students and accommodate accordingly.

## Principal Effectiveness

The final aspect of principal leadership that will be addressed pertains to principal effectiveness. In our view, an effective principal is an active principal, active in the sense that he or she has a reading of the school’s pulse via school environments not only regarding the academia business but the moral tone of the school of both students and staff. This means that the principal is visible in the hallways, classrooms, and within the instructional climate. Nettles and Herrington (2007) put forward eight common traits that effective principals display. These traits included, recognizing that the focal point of business at the school centres around teaching and learning, communicating to all stakeholders the school’s mission on a consistent basis, developing standards for teaching and learning that challenge students yet attainable, supplying clear goals and checking the progress of students toward meeting them, conducting school walkabouts and going into classrooms and listening to teachers, endorsing an atmosphere of trust and sharing, structuring an effective staff and setting professional development as a top priority, and not accepting ineffective teachers (Nettles & Herrington, 2007). However, recent research has accounted for an additional variable, school context; for example,

Teachers in middle and high schools are less likely to trust their principals, less likely to report that they actively involve parents in decisions, and less active as instructional leaders in their buildings. Also, teachers in elementary schools report higher ratings of climate, openness to parents, and district support. At the secondary level, high schools show a higher leadership deficit than middle schools, as well as lower ratings on climate, openness to parents, and district support. (Seashore Louis et al., 2010, p. 100)

Trust, or a lack of this, can impair functionality and often renders a school ineffective. Nettles and Herrington (2007) suggested, “effective principals have a comprehensive knowledge of leadership strategies and have developed an awareness of when to use them. Further, they understand how to balance school culture, the student population, and the community to promote increased student achievement” (p. 731). Other research from Vanderhaar et al. (2006) echoed similar notions about principal effectiveness when stating:

The three most effective leadership practices that were identified are a) situational awareness (the principal is aware of details and undercurrents in running the school and uses information to address current and potential problems); b) intellectual stimulation (the principal ensures that faculty and staff are made aware of the most current theories and practices and incorporates discussion of these as aspects of school culture); and, c) input (teachers are involved in the design and implementation of important decisions). (p. 18)

After completing our research and summarizing the salient points, we believed it is safe to conclude that principal leadership behaviors and principal effectiveness do not function in isolation from one another, but instead work together in harmony affecting student achievement indirectly. From our perspective, both involve an awareness of curriculum and the ability to communicate knowledge to staff in a supportive and nurturing fashion. Also, both involve some degree of action to be taken, whether it be physically going into classrooms or participating in PLCs or TLCPs. From our experience, staff does appreciate the fact that the principal also partakes in the learning and models this behavior within the school. What is vital in this process may be out of the control of the school administrator as Seashore Louis et al. (2010) concluded: “district leaders need to find ways to help secondary and elementary school principals’ work with teachers in order to improve. They also need to help principals structure their work schedules in order to find sufficient time to do this” (p. 91).

## **The Teacher and Student Achievement**

At its most influential level, instructional leadership involves the expertise of the classroom teacher interacting with students and actually teaching students how and what to learn. For the purpose of this paper, we considered teachers as school leaders who assume leadership roles within the classroom and school setting in relation to student achievement. Wahlstrom and Louis (2008) pointed out how, “there is consensus among scholars that classroom experiences have the greatest impact on whether students learn a lot or a little” (p. 464). Further, “it is classroom instruction, after all, that is the nexus or focal point around which all reforms ultimately revolve, as instruction is the most direct link to student achievement” (p. 468). Ballard and Bates (2008) add: “the quality of a teacher in the classroom is the single most important factor in determining how well a child learns” (p. 560). In order to maintain quality classroom instruction, remain current with curriculum expectations and instructional leadership initiatives, “. . . it is the responsibility of teachers themselves to be informed of educational practices and research that affects the instruction delivered to students” (p. 562), above what is offered and delivered by school districts.

In our view, this means that even though the school board will provide job-embedded professional development and send teachers to workshops or

in-services, teachers themselves must be conducting their own personal professional development. This could mean taking additional qualification courses where action research is required, working toward a specialist qualification, or simply reading current educational literature. As administrators, we must search for and welcome every opportunity big or small to assist teachers to grow professionally. Throughout the year, we must make every moment a valuable one to encourage professional development. Among the many opportunities to engage with teachers, one occurs on an annual basis, the sharing of the Annual Learning Plan (ALP) with the staff member. In the ALP, there is room for professional and personal growth, and we do encourage this. Our practical example is supported by Ballard and Bates (2008) as they note: "Teachers need to become familiar with current research on student achievement and network with colleagues to learn more about teaching expertise" (p. 562). Other research from Miller (2003) identified that effective teacher preparation is a key component when developing effective teaching. Further comments from Ballard and Bates (2008) suggested how it is the teacher's duty to find ways to educate all students and partake in professional development activities. To help develop a quality classroom teacher, Ballard and Bates (2008) explained how differentiated instruction (DI) practices need to be used within the classroom, utilizing and analysing data to help drive instruction and knowing the student's areas of strengths and weaknesses when assisting a student to succeed. Similar research from Louis et al. (2010) suggested, "certain behaviors of teachers, such as using academic objectives to establish learning expectations, effective classroom management strategies, and differentiated pacing of instruction based both on the content and the characteristics of the learners, were consistently associated with student achievement" (p. 316).

Thus far we have identified the principal and teacher leadership qualities and characteristics that influence student achievement either indirectly or directly. What is important to note is that neither attributes, from the principal's perspective or the teacher's perspective, work in isolation. Rather, both must work cohesively together to support one another in an attempt to improve the final product, that of student achievement. As indicated in Miller (2003), "effective leadership adds value to the impact of classroom and teacher practices and ensures that lasting change flourishes" (p. 5). Identifying that there must be a partnership and shared belief between all professionals in the building with respect to student achievement is crucial as "the majority of research discusses the fact that accountability must be shared among different groups in order to be effective and reflect student learning" (Ballard & Bates, 2008, p. 565).

### **When School Leadership is Ineffective**

It is obvious in any organization or profession that when leadership is not effective the entire organization is affected. Yet "leadership success depends greatly on the skill with which leaders adapt their practices to the circumstances in which

they find themselves, their understanding of the underlying causes of the problems they encounter, and how they respond to those problems” (Seashore Louis et al., 2010, p. 94). With specific reference to the school setting, if school leaders do not demonstrate a democratic approach to managing and facilitating the daily procedures of the school and an undemocratic approach is used, “a variety of undesirable outcomes [surface, such as]: dependent and apathetic followers, low-quality policies coupled with inefficient implementation and constituent support, the mystification of the decision-making process, and in some cases, social strife and aggression” (Gastil, 1994, p. 955).

With respect to teacher efficacy, Tschannen-Moran and Barr (2004) pointed out that a reciprocal relationship between student achievement and collective teacher efficacy does exist and if this relationship is compromised, “negative reciprocal relationships will lower both collective teacher efficacy and student efficacy beliefs, resulting in lowered student achievement” (p. 196). Further findings from Tschannen-Moran and Barr (2004) indicated, “teachers with a low sense of efficacy spend less time on academics, easily give up on students if the students do not learn quickly, and criticize students for their failures” (p. 194). Finally, Tschannen-Moran and Barr (2004) concluded, “teachers who have low sense of individual efficacy rely on extrinsic rewards and negative sanctions to motivate students” (p. 194). As prior research has indicated, school leaders at all levels, need to be active participants and engaged in a common goal if successful student achievement is to be the end product.

## **Summary**

Based on our review, we believe it is clear that school leadership does influence student achievement. Teachers are school leaders because they do lead their classes, coach, and lead intramural and extramural activities. Also, teachers need to manage discipline, set classroom expectations that are aligned with overall school expectations, and, most importantly, teach. Teachers need to demonstrate initiative, motivation, collaboration, and a genuine concern for the success of their students. If this is lacking, it then becomes an issue for the principal at which point intervention may be required.

From the material presented herein, there was an overwhelming amount of evidence supporting the notion that principal leadership had an indirect impact on student achievement. As a result, it was important to dig deeper and identify with peripheral attributes of the principal such as democratic leadership style, principal behavior, and principal effectiveness when discussing student achievement.

## **Conclusions**

It was evident that even though the majority of evidence presented suggested that principals have an indirect influence on student achievement, principals

do influence the necessary framework for appropriate instructional leadership. Principals are the foundation for instructional leadership at the school level. Also, Seashore Louis et al. (2010) concluded that even though a principal may not have expert knowledge of all curriculum content, principals are able to use their talents in order to support student learning which indirectly effects student achievement.

Other findings from the literature suggested that in order for student achievement to flourish at the school level, school leaders at all levels must be able to work together in unison. The literature further identified that the principal is the key player when fostering trust among staff. In fact “effective principals display caring attitudes toward staff members, students, and parents. Most important, effective principals expect and help teachers to design and facilitate learning experiences that inspire, interest, and actively involve students” (O’Donnell & White, 2005, p. 5). Moreover, “supportive principal behavior and faculty trust were significantly correlated in their sample of secondary schools and that schools with higher levels of engaged teachers (including commitment to students) had higher levels of trust in colleagues” (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008, p. 462). Still we cannot make teachers trust one another through direct action, and we cannot micro-manage individuals. At one point, people need to talk to others and be able to express themselves appropriately and professionally.

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