

Windows on Leadership

A Manual for Developing Leadership in Charter Schools

KSRA, Inc. d/b/a Teacher Training Institute
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Table of Contents

Chapter	Page
1. Components of Good Leadership.....	1
2. The Principal and Student Achievement.....	19
3. The Tangram Balance.....	32
4. Styles Instruments	42
5. Environmental Audit	47
6. Mission, Vision and Tools for Making Progress.....	65
7. Focused and Holistic Supervision	83
8. Professional Development with the School System	91
9. Promoting Fair and Data-Based Appraisal	101
10. Culture Building.....	110
11. Dealing with Difficult Conversations	121
12. Communication in Communities	127
13. Managing the Change Process	134
14. Asset-Building Schools	141
15. Identified Characteristics of Admired and Effective Leaders..	145
16. Mental Management	152
17. Developing Organizational Character	157
More Questions.....	165
Final Thoughts	171
Recommended Reading.....	172
References	177

Components of Good Leadership

***“We must do everything at once, and yet find a place to begin.”
(Peter Senge, 2000)***

“From the standpoint of daily life...there is one thing we do know: that man is here for the sake of other men—above all for those upon whose smile and well-being our own happiness depends, and also for the countless unknown souls with whose fate we are connected by a bond of sympathy. Many times a day, I realize how much my own outer and inner life is built upon the labors of my fellow men, both living and dead, and how earnestly I must exert myself in order to give in return as much as I have received.” (Albert Einstein, The World as I See It: Ideas and Opinions, 1954)

In much of the leadership effectiveness research, we find that school leadership should be viewed not so much as a position but as a way of being and thinking. Leadership is not the same as a position in a bureaucracy (Senge, 2000). Leadership is, at its best, an art, created from a collection of effective professional and personal practices. Though leadership should be understood as a shared activity; according to Johnson (1990), effective principals are those who made good teaching possible.

Leaders are systems-thinkers and visionaries as well as being extremely competent. The positive effects of good leadership in a good school are visible in many ways, and they are experienced regularly in the culture as a whole. A strong and trusted leader is critical in moving a learning community to a continuously-monitored position of achievement and excellence in all areas for which the school is responsible to the community-at-large. Rosenholtz (1989) identifies measures of organizational effectiveness including 1) school problem-solving and renewal capabilities, 2) satisfaction of individual needs, 3) maintaining motivation and values, and 4) school productivity or measuring student learning outcomes. The more a principal promotes a culture of learning and the more teachers are involved in learning, the more students learn, the more effective the school organization.

There are many summaries of research on what makes a good school. In reviewing literature on good schools, Duttweiler (1990, cited in Sergiovani 2000), include the following characteristics (among others):

- *“being student centered, offering academically rich programs that emphasize higher-order as well as lower-order cognitive objectives,”*
- *“providing in-depth coverage of content. . .”*
- *“providing a distinctive normative structure that supports teaching and learning.”*
- *“providing focused and organized teaching...”*
- *“using a variety of teaching strategies...”*

- *“learning takes place in a positive school climate characterized by a sense of order, purpose, and direction fostered by consistency among teachers...”*
- *“collegial interaction and shared leadership.”*

These characteristics of good schools are tied not only to strong leadership but also to a focus on systemic culture development and the focus of whole-school learning and continuous improvement.

What do the terms “systemic culture development” and “systems thinking” mean for leaders? Senge et al. (2000, 1996), Scholtes (1998), Deming (1986, 1994), and many others discuss the importance of thinking of all of the elements and events of the school as part of a larger structure. *Sunistanai* (Greek for “to cause to stand together”) is the root of the word “systems.” Systems thinking in schools includes regular study and understanding of the holistic nature of school systems and their structure, participation in making any decisions or changes. Everyone in leadership positions in a school that is working toward a position of excellence is essentially involved in systems thinking. Systems thinking and systemic culture development require that the paradigm of leadership shift from one of “control and inspect” to one in which reflection, deep discussions of purpose and intrinsic values are used to guide and develop the school organization. There are many available graphic aids to support those involved in school development, in systems thinking. For example, in *Schools that Learn* (2000, p. 80) Senge et al. provides an iceberg diagram. The tip of the iceberg above the water represents the “events” or “what just happened.” In a “control and inspect” model there would be an immediate reaction and a “fix.” The fix would be directed at the visible surface of the event. In contrast to the “identify and fix the individual problem” mentality, in a systems thinking approach, the leader realizes clearly that “below the water’s surface” are other elements underlying the iceberg’s visible surface, and these must be recognized and dealt with. According to Senge et al, these elements under the surface, are defined as

1. Patterns/Trends: “What’s been happening? Have we been here or someplace similar before?”
2. Systemic Structures: “What are the forces at play contributing to these patterns?”
3. Mental Models: “What about our thinking allows this situation to persist?”

In the process of systems thinking, the leader does not get completely sucked into the whirlpool of daily, quarterly, and yearly events without using tools to keep his or her vision balanced and focused on the bigger picture and on the system as a whole. When problems occur, the leader examines the system rather than looking for culprits. A leader who keeps an eye on the

system at all times, understands the forces of stability and resistance, uses discussion groups, reflection loops, focus teams, statistical tools or diagrams, and in short, develops a learning organization that uncovers its mental models, resistances, and fears, brings forth commitment and uses individual and group learning to move forward. This process does require dedication and ownership in all of the participants, so a leader must attend to professional development and systemic development at once. (Following chapters discuss these ideas in more depth.)

There are several classical models of leadership that may be examined, including Fiedler's contingency model, the leadership theory of Hersey-Blanchard, Learning Organization theory, and the Vroom-Yetton leadership model (among others), along with many articles and research from business and education situations. In addition, there are many recently-published texts on leadership that may also be examined including (but not limited to), *The Leadership Challenge* by Kouzes and Posner (1995); *The Lifeworld of Leadership and Moral Leadership* by Sergiovanni (2000, 1992); *Learning Organizations: Developing Cultures for Tomorrow's Workplace* edited by Chawla and Renesch (1995), *Schools that Learn* by Senge et al (2000), *The Reflective Principal* by Stewart, Prebble and Duncan (1997), and *Power Thinking for Leaders* by Mangeiri and Block (2000), just to name a few selections from the plethora of fine educational and business leadership books. From these models, and an extensive review of books and research,, some themes about leadership emerge.

General expertise, daily ability in overseeing and performing necessary tasks, developing trust, commitment and performance in others, consciously and positively shaping organizations, and helping to move everyone toward a preferred future, are all part and parcel of good leadership in schools. Good communication skills, emotional intelligence, self-evaluation, ability to develop positive diversity, and the ability to broaden the whole enterprise are also important in school leadership, as are of course, general ability to manage operations. Envisioning the future for all in the school, as well as being skilled in practical ways of developing the personnel and community into a culture of excellence and "can do" spirit, are also part of the work of an effective leader. Continuous improvement in a school is a state of mind, a part of the culture, and is directly promoted by the leadership of the school.

Teachers who have a sense of self-determination and competence, and work to create meaning, must see themselves in the school as having certain discretion in what they choose to do; they must have a deep personal connection to the school and they must be confident about their abilities. Teachers must feel a sense of control and power in their work. These foundational components for developing an excellent work ethic for the good of students can also be actively fostered by a good educational leader.

Effective curriculum and student learning are the primary foci of a school leader's work. Because a principal-leader cannot do the work of individual teachers who interact with students every day, it is the principal's responsibility to ensure that educational leadership and on-going teacher development, for the good of students, is the "main event" (Learning Forum, 2003), in principal's work. A principal needs to take time to do weekly planning, monthly planning, and annual goals planning, but with a focus on priorities and on activities directly related to the vision and mission of the school as well as on short- and long-term objectives. This is crucial work for a school leader of excellence. Schools are event-driven institutions. It is very easy for a principal to concentrate on putting out fires, doing the urgent, and getting over-involved in the daily operational trivia. The important and key areas of the school must not be lost in the urgent and trivial. Decisions must be shared and ownership must be developed. One way of creating ownership is to push decisions to the lowest level possible, to those actually responsible for development and implementation. Ownership increases motivation, purpose and energy. With ownership must also come accountability. Ownership and accountability must go hand in hand, and one won't be effectively promoted without the other. Clear objectives, rules for operations, philosophical expectations, timelines, benchmarks and so forth, should be defined and cooperatively bought-into prior to entering the process of problem-solving and decision-making. Accountability should include both quantitative and qualitative data, analysis and clear reporting, followed by more and varied loops of data and analysis directing any implementation process.

There has been a lot of talk about style in leadership. The effectiveness of a leader's style may vary depending on the needs of the school, the existing strengths and weaknesses, as well as the objectives, mission and vision. However, leadership power derived *from* the culture appears generally the most effective in schools and for teacher satisfaction and thus ultimately for student achievement. It typically develops an entrepreneurial spirit among teachers, a heart for action, and collective and collaborative purposeful service within the whole event of education. Other models of leadership such as those espousing an authoritarian model (*power over*) coupled with specific controls imposed by the principal alone, may be initially useful for a school in which there is no clear understanding of personal responsibility, little intrinsic individual and team control measures, or in which students are failing to achieve due to lack of vision and coherent approaches. "*Power over*" others is generally chosen as a method of leadership when trust is lacking. Though "*power over*" may be effective in some cases, the deep structure of the school may not be changing sufficiently for lasting commitment. For example, lesson plans may be turned in and look neat, but standards may not be effectively met in the classroom, or instructional delivery may hinder instead of advance the learning. Or, a person may be on time and checking in to a faculty meeting, but once there, a mental check-out may occur which no amount of coercion will affect. Yet, "people are

pleased to have a leader who will not bend with every new wind or every new crisis. They need someone to count on—someone they know will stick to the central core of what is most important. And when that core is attacked, you stand strong. You stay the course because you know you are on the right course.” (Monroe, 1998, cited in *The Hero’s Journey*, p. 130). Every leader must ultimately discover that there is a balance that provides clarity of direction and firm resolve to do the right thing, coupled with developing the entrepreneurial spirit and shared leadership for the good of students.

Leaders who have vision in the forefront of action, are pleased to develop other leaders in the school, and thus are providing a wider base of expertise for the whole school community. Teachers, parents and principals all drive student-focused reform. Senge (1999) defines the need for leaders across the spectrum of the school, not “just at the top.” He defines three types of leaders:

1. local leaders,
2. internal networkers (also called network leaders or community builders),and
3. executive leaders.

Each of these types of leaders has a different power base and points of influence, but together, they enrich and expand the expertise, the motivation, and the knowledge for the school reform efforts. It is the leader’s duty to uncover, develop, and use all of these resources well.

In addition to identifying and developing leadership everywhere, it is helpful that the developing leadership cadre attend to components of communication and change. Aristotle referenced three components, which also may form a framework for a tri-partite view of the responsibilities of leadership. The management of all three must be part of every good leader’s activity. LOGOS is the reason, data and logic possessed. Leaders must have a strong understanding of data on student achievement, on the logic of events, on financial status, on reasons behind decisions, as well as about the law, regulations and statutes, and be able to communicate these to the school community. ETHOS refers to moral character which includes expertise, trustworthiness, and shared values. A school leader should have specific expertise in a scholarly area and have experience sharing not only that but also general knowledge and skill with others. The leader should be continually working on personal integrity and on developing integrity in systems. The leader must express strong moral character so that trust and shared values may arise from this foundation. PATHOS refers to emotional and psychological needs, including an understanding of these needs in others, the ability to address style preferences, and how to promote a win-win spirit. The leader is sensitive to pathos in the whole school organization, and is able, not through mere psychological authority, personality or manipulation, but through deeply trusted moral leadership, to build strength in the community, stewardship and enthusiasm for the vision.

Leadership exists within a culture. Culture is the “soul” of an organization, and though entwined with climate, is distinct from climate. Climate is the evidence of day to day environment, rules, procedures, policies, environmental artifacts, celebrations, and so forth. Culture and climate are interdependent. Culture, however, is the deeper structure that coherently or incoherently expresses the beliefs and philosophy, purposes and objectives, of the organization. Culture is the “deep structure,” so to speak, of both the systems and the vibrant life of the school. (Sergiovanni (2000) discusses the *systems world* vs. the *life-world* of an organization specifically, which will be discussed in a later chapter.) A leader is responsible for maintaining both the system and the life of the school, as both are important to the quality of general effort, student effect and level of follower-ship.

Excellent leadership styles can't be fully explained by behavioral models. There is much more in the complexity of leadership than an analysis and copying of certain preferred behaviors and responses. In the work to achieve SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, results-based, and time-bound) goals, it appears in organizational and leadership literature, that strong and coherent professional relationships within the format of a learning organization are key contributions in the work of an effective leader. The development of professional relationships and collegial dedication to the vision are foundational. An ability to understand needs and motivators, to develop the entrepreneurial spirit, to resolve conflict fairly, to increase inclusion, and to promote a purposeful, vision-based, and dedicated work ethic of the school can be furthered more quickly through appropriate professional and trusting relationships. Leadership by personal example and high standards of self-discipline is required in a successful school. Leadership in schools that promotes skilled collaboration, requires reflection on purpose and practice, and develops shared capacity, will be more effective for the purpose of improving student achievement, than one in which teachers are viewed under a Theory X perspective and that necessitates strict direction and control. Shared responsibility develops out of a culture of commitment and dedication to continuous improvement.

The belief and character of the leader is expressed clearly through actions, choices and language used in the school. Whether the leader shares knowledge or not, shares leadership or not, chooses to evidence integrity and a moral stance on important questions or not, promotes equity, promotes healthy mental models and a systemic vision or not, focuses on accountability or not, and truly believes in the importance of the teaching profession and of teachers or not, will affect the culture and the long-term effects of the culture. The ability to identify talents and develop those who work in developing knowledge and skills, personal scholarship, and student scholarship and achievement, as an integrated team, is a very different paradigm from managing laborers in different grade levels who are trained, and then either deliver a program effectively or not, and essentially are replaceable. Manipulation or coercion

may work in the short term but have high costs. Pride in the mission coupled with quality work are much more effective long-term for developing healthy and successful students and teachers.

Leadership is not the same as management, yet both are important to the success of the school. Management typically works within the paradigm of control and operations, yet it's important to remember that management of operations, procedures and processes is not the same as management of people. Leadership of people (in particular, students and teachers) is essentially a direct and "full-contact" involvement in the organization, in the messy, chaotic, changing, and often conflicted process of moving toward excellence together. The leader asks the difficult questions such as

- "How can we move more effectively toward achievement of the mission?"
- "What gets in the way of your doing your best work and how can we work to eliminate wasted time and effort and energy-drains in our system, so that the important things take precedence?"
- "How shall we do this work appropriately for the achievement of students," or simply,
- "What shall we do better?"

in order to seek the answers with the faculty and community. These are challenging topics for leadership to take on, yet different ones than those which typically arise during the processes of control and management. However, getting back to management of processes, procedures and data, let us remind ourselves that management and its focus on controlling and coordinating resources is a vital subset of a leadership position. Neenan Archistruction in Ft. Collins, Colorado, has designed an interesting illustration for personal leadership. It is a diamond, on the four points of which are the words: VISION, ETHICS, COURAGE, and REALITY. As leaders, we immediately find personal comfort levels and/or strengths in one or two of these, but for most leaders, comfort and strength are not equal at all points of the diamond. As leaders, it is our responsibility to attend equally to all of the points. If we are visionaries, we may forget to attend to the realities of the budget. If we are realists, we may spend most time on inspect and control measures coupled with financial evaluation, and neglect the courage and ethics required to move the organization forward through vision and connection.

There are at least three components of good leadership (Tozer, J. 1997, p. 16) which support the Logos, Ethos, and Pathos of an organization, discussed earlier:

- 1) *The physical component* which includes the means to operate, finance logistics, products, human resources,
- 2) *The conceptual component* as the thought process, including fundamental principles and doctrine, development, and
- 3) *The moral component*, employee commitment, leadership, motivation, team spirit and morale.

Again, each of these is important, and the leader cannot neglect the third component due to the time-demands from the first two. To maintain balance in the system, the leader must also become expert in the balance of all the components. In attending to the various components, many good leaders confront problems or conflicts using a *backward reasoning* process. In this process, the leader, keeping the vision and mission in mind, lists each step that would need to occur prior to moving forward toward the vision.

One step backward follows another until one arrives at the step the leader must take at the present moment. (Reference: Mangieri and Block, 2000). Exercises like this help the leader to take time to reflect on the big picture and to ensure that reflection occurs that is focused on the vision before simply moving into a new change.

In a 1998 study, the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory profiled the leadership needs of charter school founders. This profile is consistent with previously mentioned information about leadership in schools, noting

- *“charter school founders require expertise in building an organizational and leadership vision....*
- *The ability to develop an academically rigorous curriculum that is true to the mission and aligned with program and student assessments.*
- *The ability to deal with controversy, work with the media and develop positive relationships with interest groups...”*

Because there are many resources for school leaders focusing on the first component of Tozer’s list, this manual will focus on the last two components, which also are coincident with the *ethos* and *pathos* of the organization, a systemic view of developing a learning organization, and the requirement to keep all four points of the Neenan Corporation’s “diamond” of vision, ethics, courage and reality in view at all times. A clear understanding of the components of leadership and how to develop true leadership is foundational in schools of excellence. A sense of “renewal of the spirit” occurs in schools of collaborative inquiry, clearly defined and shared goals, wherein a refreshment of innovation is allowed and encouraged.

Organizational culture is “a communication process by which organizational members make sense of their organization and their roles and duties” (Haskins 1996). In much research and in extensive interviews with teachers and principals, the author of this manual has discovered that a key element that distinguishes excellent schools that are committed to moving ever upward, seems to be 1) the clearly articulated and agreed-to vision and purpose by all members of the community, 2) clear delineation of span of authority balanced with entrepreneurial spirit; 3) access to sufficient training and resources; 4) open and honest communication systems; and 5) trust. In fact, in a recent issue of *Education Week* an article appeared discussing a new book entitled

Trust in Schools: A Core Resource for Improvement. Authors Bryk and Schneider (2002) discuss relational trust, noting, “We have identified a missing ingredient in the reform recipes: the nature of social practice among adults in school communities and how this is mobilized for sustained school improvement.” Trust, though seeming an element of common sense in developing a school of excellence, is yet another focus area for the leader, but it is important to remember in any discussion, that trust cannot be artificially created. Trust comes from the central integrity of the leader and the system; it is not the outcome of procedures or methods external to it. Trust involves giving attention to the individual contributions as well as to the synergy of the community. Some schools create their own working “constitutions” under which progress and responsibility are measured, and which undergird trust. An example of a working constitution might include the following statements:

1. We are committed individually and as a learning community to improving our skills in all areas for the ultimate and primary benefit of our students.
2. We use data at every level of our school to inform our practice.
3. We agree that everything is important.
4. We use our learning preferences to contribute to the whole rather than to justify the personal comfort zone.
5. We are willing to work together to identify areas that can be improved, and to improve them; doing whatever is necessary.
6. We respect differences and divergent thinking.

A constitution for a school might be hung on the wall of the faculty lounge where meetings occur, and referred to often as a reminder of the school’s orientation toward problem-solving and personal commitment.

Finally, those in leadership tend to get into trouble when there is an attempt to maintain focus on the “trivial many” rather than the “vital few” problems (Conzemius and O’Neill, 2002). Schools are event-driven. This is a given. Knowing this fact, leaders should create ways to regularly re-focus their time and energy on what will bring the greatest gain, and what will move the school toward achievement of its priorities, keeping the “big picture” vision continually in mind while at the same time, attending carefully to student achievement as well as to the crucial professional relationships and whole-school culture development. The leader must change from habits in the school of reactions to the urgent and move methodically and joyfully toward addressing the areas that are important. The analytical use of data and statistics can help in this process along with regular qualitative review and the discussion of essential questions of curriculum and purpose. Fostering collegial team development (students included!), teacher leadership, integrity, balance, ownership, commitment, flexibility, joy and wonder (reference Quantum Learning for Teachers and Educators training; Learning Forum) and a systems-thinking approach to school development are also keys to building a school of excellence.

Quote for reflection:

“To get a feel for the true essence of leadership, assume that everyone who works with you is a volunteer. Assume that your employees are there because they want to be, not because they have to be. (In fact, they really are volunteers—especially those upon whom you depend the most. The best people are always in demand, and they can choose where they lend their talents and gifts. They remain because they volunteer to stay.) What conditions would need to exist for your staff to want to enlist in your “volunteer” organization? Under volunteer conditions, what would you need to do if you wanted people to perform at high levels?” (Kouzes and Posner, 1995, p. 31)

The Principal and Student Achievement

If there were no school building or few resources, but still students ready to learn, a school could exist. Dedicated teachers and students working together are the foundation of a school. All over the world, schools exist in courtyards, in the backs of stores, and out of doors without access to any textbooks or whiteboards or administrative services, and students learn. Though the reader may respond to this comment with a smile, this fact is important to keep in mind as it helps to maintain focus on what is really important in a school. It's not the new construction plan, the science resources, the business meetings or the computers that make a good school, although all of these are important contributions. What makes a good school are the teachers and students and parents working together to educate youth well. Thus, in a school of excellence, a principal's primary focus area must be on educational and instructional leadership, and the majority of a principal's time should reflect this priority. Interestingly, this is not always the case. When a principal regularly evaluates the percentage of time spent effectively focusing on teachers, student education and achievement, that principal can ensure that educational leadership is not being put on the back burner due to other urgent matters. If a principal needs support in examining a new computer system for example, that principal might consider delegating some of the work or forming a team to do some of the evaluation, rather than eliminating time from working with teachers and students with the insistent goal of educational excellence.

In French, and in other languages, there is a distinction between instruction and education. Instruction is the formal process usually considered as the purpose of the school; education includes everything from which a student learns something. I use the term *excellence* in connection with student achievement, as it covers a wider span of consideration, including everything that relates to developing a young person's life. In the words of Learning Forum's Quantum Learning for Teachers program, "The main event of education is to *build the source* so that resources are there for the student." This means having a plan to address all of the sources of education and instruction that impact a student at your school. It means that all in the school consciously attend to the care, safety, support, belonging, team development, personal character and joy of students, along with promoting strong attention to meeting high instructional standards and increasing student comprehension and creative "pattern-making" within and between subject and skill areas (reference Learning Forum training programs, 2003).

One way to maintain focus on "building the source" for students is to plan with the results in mind. Most people think of planning as starting from the present and making changes. However, as mentioned in Chapter 1, another effective method of planning is to plan backward. One might take part of the mission statement and plan backward. A principal, for example, might realize

that the part of the vision that relates to “developing good citizenship” has not been attended to very much, and instead of implementing a character education assembly, might first with the teachers and parent community, look at what steps must precede the achievement of this part of the mission. The planning will be precise and based on existing data and ever-more-specific ideas for implementation. As the principal and the team move backward in planning from the general goal of “good citizenship” to identify barriers and to define specific ideas that can be developed at each grade level and within content instruction, the principal and the team can then begin to move forward again, putting a plan into action. Or, a school leader might take a specific academic area that needs attention (such as the math skills that are below proficient in 35% of the students). Instead of the “forward plan” of merely replacing an existing math program “that doesn’t seem to be doing the job,” time might be better spent in going backward a bit, analyzing with the teachers, students and parents, in light of state standards, where the strengths of instruction are and what challenge areas or gaps remain. The principal and the team might evaluate in a systemic way, what needs to occur for the goal of 100% achievement in basic math skills and mathematical thinking at each grade level. During this process, the focus should be **on alterable variables** (all variables over which a school has control), not on the unalterable variables such as family history or socio-economic status. This way of thinking gives power to the faculty and parents focused on student achievement and on attending to everything that builds success for students. The discussions should not be on what isn’t possible to be changed, but rather on what *is*. Perhaps instructional methods need to be revisited; perhaps time given to content instruction is the issue; perhaps relationships and rapport need to be built with the parents along with addressing the late homework problems; perhaps teacher professional development is not strong enough in certain subject matters. When a principal and staff begin to attend to student achievement with a focus on

1. the alterable variables,
2. data gathering,
3. backward planning with the results in mind (referenced also Covey 1994), and
4. a willingness to improve the status of things,
5. real power can be felt through the school system. Students will feel it, and dedicated teachers will be motivated by it. When the four steps above are attended to, the whole system will begin to make a paradigm shift, and this shift can be the beginning of fundamental change.

One of the key areas for principal oversight is that of meeting standards. It is important that a principal work with teachers to create a system in which curriculum, assessment and action planning for student achievement are linked. During this process, the Colorado charter school principal might take the existing state standards and district standards and benchmarks and align them with the chosen curriculum. A professional development plan should be

connected to this alignment, looking at priority areas of the school and gaps in needed knowledge and skill in areas of the standards, and designing specific focus areas for teachers implementing the curriculum. The supervision and appraisal system should also be connected to the overall linked system of standards, assessment, student achievement data gathering and professional development, as well as to action plans for improving student learning (Carr and Harris, 2001).

In developing effective multiple assessment strategies, criteria, rubrics, and communication are essential. Students should be involved in the evaluation of their work and understand ways to improve and move toward proficiency or more advanced levels in achieving standards at each grade level. Performance benchmarks for each standard should be created and be quantifiable. This information might be shared with parents and students through more specific report cards, at conferences, and in the context of the classroom.

Action plans to improve student learning from the data received in creating a standards-based school would be designed next in the ongoing process. Student performance results would be examined along with other information about students and learning. The information would be interpreted and summarized by a group of teachers and an action plan would be designed to improve student performance. A timeline and student performance goals would be added to the action plan. Information on the plan and on progress is communicated with all key people involved. This type of strategic design will create fundamental change in the system, with the focus remaining on student learning and achievement. It also moves a fragmented system into a more coherent organization that begins to become a learning community.

Too often, change is not fundamental in the system. Changes in schools occur so often that many believe “It’s not important to do much deep change; just hang out on the edges of the proposed change, and it won’t be long before something else will be coming down the road. It’s a waste of time and energy trying to do everything that comes along.” Changes may appear large but may actually be superficial (even the adoption of new history textbooks across all grade levels may not really be addressing the fundamental issue of lack of student understanding and interest.) Sometimes large changes are advocated by one individual, such as a principal or board member, who believes that a quick change, such as a new math curriculum, will take care of the problem of student learning. Perhaps the curriculum is the problem but without attending to the potential need for new teacher skills or knowledge, new languaging or instructional delivery, the development of grade-level and cross-grade teamwork, articulation of skills between grade levels, and so on, the change of curriculum will be less effective and may even meet with resistance by parents or teachers because those involved in the day-to-day work of implementing the curriculum have not been included in the process of analysis and planning.

When teachers have real buy-in to the mission, wonderful things can happen. Intrinsic motivation supports willingness to participate in deeper study of a subject or developing training in skills development; teams start to form naturally and essential discussions begin to occur throughout the entire system. Systems thinking and living has been advocated by many authors and researchers, but the term came into public focus in education with the work of Senge, Kofman, Kanter, Handy, and others, and in works such as *The Fifth Discipline* and *Learning Organizations*. Systems thinking involves attending to the whole system. It is a way of seeing and responding in an environment that attends to

1. personal mastery,
2. mental models,
3. shared vision,
4. team learning and
5. systems thinking.

Systems thinking for leaders requires a specific paradigm of operations, personnel communication and development, and vision sharing. A systems thinker, for example, does not seek a “culprit teacher” who has not done the job, or a “culprit student” who is interfering with learning in a class and then determine a quick fix for the problem before moving on to another problem. The systems thinker does not seek culprits and quick fixes; rather this thinker steps back to look at the larger picture of the whole system to seek what has allowed the perceived lack to exist, and makes plans with other members of the group to improve the system.

Systems thinking in relation to student achievement includes specific planning for educational excellence. In developing a good system for student achievement, and in addition to attending to personal factors of development in the system, a principal would:

1. Create a way to track individual student progress over time and in relation to standards. This method would be shared with everyone in the community, and the individual and group results shared and analyzed by teachers and then with the specific students and their parents. Many districts in Colorado now have the opportunity to purchase software to analyze state standardized test results more specifically, disaggregating individual student progress in specific skill areas of the state tests over time. Wherever possible, this type of analysis should be accessed and used. In addition, other data gathering about classroom assessments and instruction should occur with the goal of seeking student progress over time in relation to standards and in relation to other valued school goals such as character development.
2. Examine time and focus given to learning. This means examining the “real” time given to focused learning, comprehension and retention of information. Activities that accompany lessons should be examined by teacher teams that may include the principal, to define specific connections to the content and skill. For instance, when students build

a log cabin out of pretzels, that activity may be teaching students how to build a log cabin out of pretzels, but it may not be teaching students much about early pioneer life. Another activity, such as a historical play, might accomplish the goals more effectively. In addition, there must be sufficient, uninterrupted time for focused learning in a classroom. I have seen literacy classes interrupted by pull-outs, put-ins, and announcements from the office, and noisy activities that reduce the actual learning time significantly.

3. Ensure building-wide interventions to increase student proficiency.

Building student proficiency is not the work of the special education team, or one particular teacher, alone. Building proficiency in everything that relates to education for all students is everyone's job, but it must be promoted by school leadership. If writing is a problem in the school, every teacher should be part of the solution. Perhaps this takes form in a committed plan for writing across the curriculum, in higher standards for writing in science essay questions, in teacher training in evaluation of good writing, and in the addition of elements of style to an existing framework for organizing written information. There should be systemic interventions for all students in increasing time to learn, increasing quality of work, and increasing understanding, retention, and active use of knowledge. These systemic plans should be able to be explained by everyone in the learning community.

- a. Have and use "big picture" tools. Big picture tools are those that give everyone in the community, students, parents, teachers, a picture of what is going on in the school. Newsletters are often the tool of preference, but there are others that are even more effective. One of these tools is the annual curriculum map. On the annual curriculum map, each teacher lists what specific content and skills and standards are being addressed at each month of the school year. Prior to school starting, the entire faculty would put their maps on the wall and through intensive cooperative analysis and revision where necessary, coverage of essential areas is ensured, and repetition in content study is eliminated. After the final draft is designed, this tool is provided to each student and parent at the beginning of the year, thus the whole community knows what the focus areas are each month and may choose to add enrichment activities at home. Following the annual curriculum map development, teachers might also develop "unit organizers" which include standards and the essential questions that will be addressed and assessed in the unit. Information on character education can also be included in the organizers. These tools are shared with the community. Students know where the class is going and the skills and knowledge they will gain from each unit as the course progresses. Yet another big picture tool that should be used effectively is the gathering and presentation of data on student achievement. Too often, data is given a cursory focus,

when it should be a major and ongoing one. Data provides quantitative information on the status of learning in certain areas, and should be used *regularly* in focusing attention and in determining development areas, rather than being used to confirm unalterable variables of home or economic situation, or being a summative rather than a formative record of student learning.

4. Create a written plan for professional development and training in light of the mission and standards, and with the budget clearly in mind.

Sometimes professional development is either a “whole school” event, or left up to individual teachers, either in the level of participation, or in determining the focus of training. If all professional development is always “whole school” there may be waste in resources in some cases. On the other hand, because a school budget is not unlimited, those teachers who seek professional growth may be the ones who typically receive the funding for their specific goals. In such a system, gaps in knowledge and skill in certain parts of the professional community may actually be promoted, or certain subject areas or grade levels might be receiving most of the funding, while other core areas are somewhat neglected in professional development strategic planning. For instance, in one school, two teachers (in fourth and third grades) wanted to continue to attend conferences sponsored by an environmental group, while another teacher (art) also requested funds and time off to attend an art show and conference. A fourth teacher (part of a team) desired professional development in older adolescent reading. The principal had the mental habit of “first come, first served” and “teachers will let me know what they need.” With this approach, however, two teachers who did not even teach specifically about the environment in their grade-level curriculums were supported in their interest area, the art teacher could enjoy new learning but it would be unclear how any transfer of knowledge would impact the school, and only one part of a teacher team showed interest in an important area of study. On the other hand, the mathematics teacher (who did not come forward to ask for professional development) continued in his methods that everyone knew were less than effective and yet received no focused training. It’s helpful to have informal proposals submitted by teachers for professional development. Also, in many cases, the appraisal process should have specific areas of professional development identified. With the standards movement securely in place in many states, a professional development plan must connect directly to the standards. This does not mean that teachers who teach in subject areas that are not directly tested should not receive professional development opportunities; to the contrary. Professional development is everyone’s job and opportunity. Creative ideas (such as a half-day off for networking or observing in other schools) may need to be included in the professional development plan to meet all the needs of faculty, along with the workshops, conferences, and scholarly study opportunities. With the goal of student achievement and student

education in mind, a holistic and strategic document planning professional development needs directly connected to a) individual PD plans and b) to the whole-school strategic plan, taking into account c) *the entire faculty*, can be a useful tool to ensure that key areas are being attended to, and that “professional development with the student in mind” is truly valued.

5. Have a specific plan for monitoring student achievement and for giving and receiving feedback in the entire school system. Rubrics and models are a method teachers often use to share information on expected level of performance prior to teaching the lessons, and to monitor student achievement. Rubrics are also benchmarks in an ongoing feedback process. Teachers give and receive feedback on the learning process regularly. Teachers have several and varied plans in their classroom management, but to my surprise, I’ve found that sometimes principals don’t have a method for receiving real feedback. I have observed principals giving feedback without any opportunity for them to receive it, or in one case, a principal making a key curricular decision based on some research he had read, without having been very often in the grade-level classrooms where the curriculum change was under question. The principal needs to be involved to some extent in the “messy and often chaotic” system of feedback and monitoring of the process of building a strong and complete foundation of success for all students in order to understand the system. The principal also needs to be approachable and available to the learning community to receive as well as to give feedback.

Finally, in addition to the specific planning system noted above, it is very helpful if the learning community, led by the principal, examines philosophical orientations to learning and school goals, and discusses a method of effective communication. Gerzon (1996), Eisner (1974), Sommers and Payne (2001), and others, discuss the deep impact of belief systems. There are many belief systems in schools coming from the various members of the mental models held by the learning community. Though there are combinations of these mental models, and most teachers and parents would say that, to some extent, all of these are important, there is usually a dominant belief held by each individuals. These mental models include the beliefs that the purpose of schools is 1) *to teach students to think*, other models include 2) *to develop individual potential*, others to 3) *have students demonstrate learning against the standards*, others to 4) *learn the habits of mind of a discipline*, others to 5) *create meaning and construct understanding through hands-on interaction with environment*, others to 6) *build character and citizenship*, and still others to 7) *instill a social conscience and influence social change*. It is important for principals to recognize these different philosophies and approaches to education, for they will underlie every major decision, approach to assessment, classroom management system, parent communication, most conflicts, and general belief about students and schooling. If these diverse belief systems are

not recognized, communication effectiveness and level of influence in the system are inhibited. Diversity of thinking is very good when it is used consciously and positively to build the community. Diversity of thinking exists, so a wise principal will recognize and capitalize on that resource rather than ignoring it or trying to suppress it. A united and lofty vision has room for different ways of thinking and practice, as long as the critical purpose of student education and achievement is at the forefront of decision-making.

A Model for Leadership: The Tangram Balance **Developed by Kathryn A. T. Knox, Ph.D.**

“Nothing is impossible; there are ways that lead to everything, and if we had sufficient will, we should always have sufficient means. It is often merely for an excuse that we say things are impossible.”

(Francois de la Rochefoucauld)

Foundational Objectives for Developing an Excellent School

Before we look at a way to uncover visual representations of the school that lie in the minds of those involved in the school, we assume commitment to the following leadership objectives for developing an excellent school:

- ❖ □ Hire the best
- ❖ □ Develop the culture from a position of clear purpose
- ❖ □ Be familiar with current research and share it
- ❖ □ Ensure that everyone understands what the job is and how to do it well, what each individual’s crucial part is in the whole
- ❖ □ Develop capacity everywhere and be present
- ❖ □ Understand all skill programs and REALLY know how the application of specific knowledge and skills are connected to your vision and mission
- ❖ □ Understand how best to share knowledge for long-term comprehension
- ❖ □ Articulate a clear vision and communicate it everywhere
- ❖ □ Articulate coherent strategy and check progress often with the team
- ❖ □ Persevere in good action
- ❖ □ Identify and eliminate whatever does not give value but consumes resources
- ❖ □ Keep the business as simple as possible
- ❖ □ Focus on the educational enterprise
- ❖ □ Move from complaint to win-win proposals for action
- ❖ □ Over-communicate information
- ❖ □ Require integrity everywhere along with an active expression of *“Never forget why you are here.”*

From the foundational position articulated in the previous objectives, one can then move into uncovering mental representations with the goal of improving communication, understanding and addressing any imbalance in the system.

The Model of the Tangram Balance

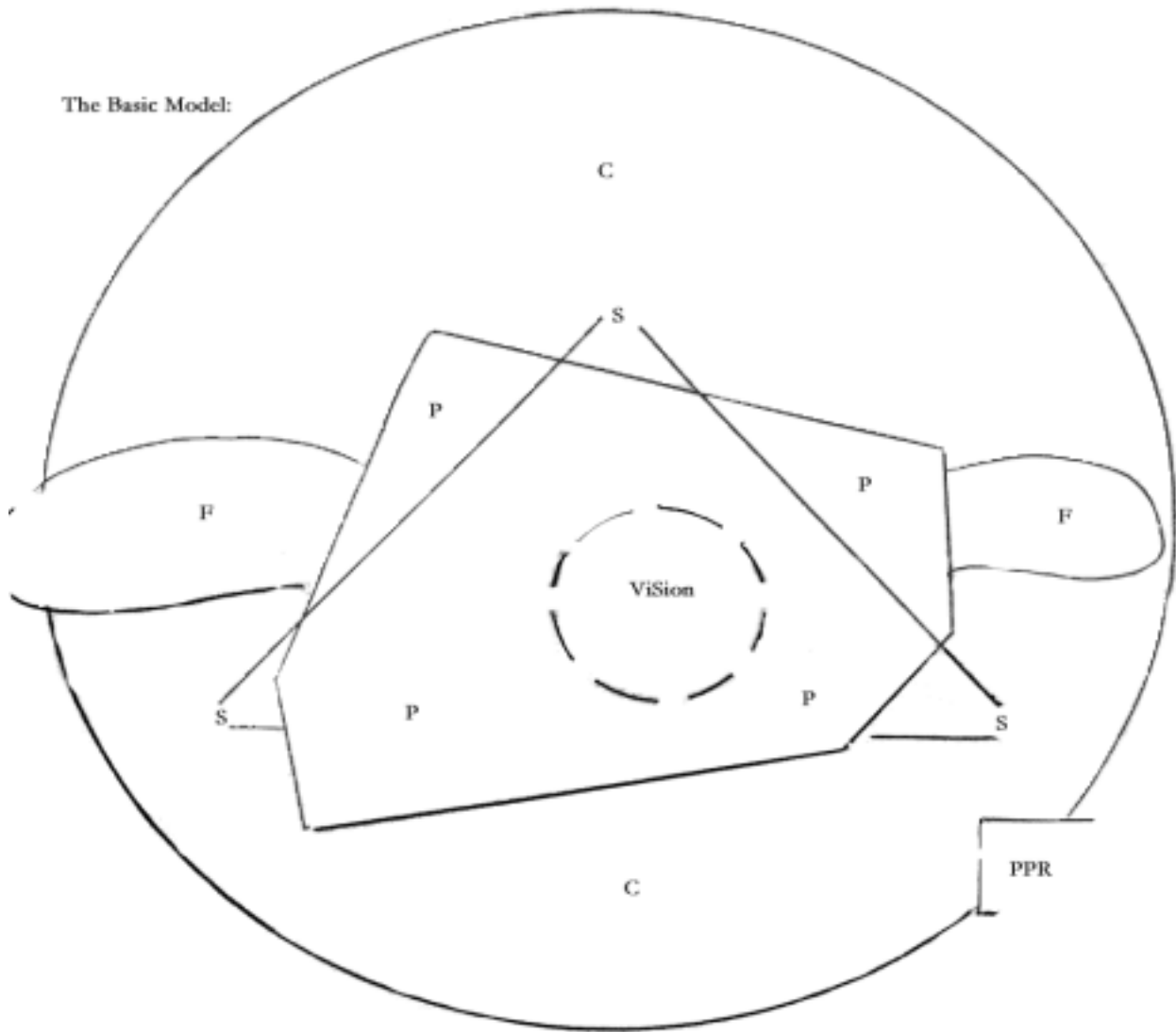
Visual representations are helpful, as they may illustrate complex relationships and perceptions as part of a system or pattern. Visual representations also help to uncover what may not be immediately visible in the minds of those involved in the school, and thus may illustrate how the personal and group perceptions of culture are congruent or disparate as an interdependent system. This information can be used for further analysis,

discussion, systemic planning and strategic development. However, as was mentioned in Chapter 1, sincere trust must precede the use of tools such as this one.

In this particular model, geometric forms are used to create a visual framework with which one can examine the various mental pictures of leadership and school organization held by those in the school community. When symbolic meaning is attached to the forms, those in a school may use the idea of a Tangram Balance to express their own mental image of what is strong and what is not strong in the organizational picture; the group might seek seeking patterns for general reflective attention, putting words aside during the initial representation. From that point, metaphors, strategies, examples, and focused discussions may be expressed from representations coming from key players in the school. The Tangram Balance thus becomes central to uncovering perceptions of the purpose and perceived existing framework, to creating shared understanding and for starting discussion on fundamental school improvement.

This model is a tool for beginning to analyze the perceptions of organizational development and structure, for graphically representing the status of the school, and may be also used as a starting point for professional development.

The Basic Model:



The V in the middle of the model stands for **vision**. It is central and yet not closed. It is within a circle rotating, dynamic and continually transparent to the enterprise. The “vision” has a capital **S** in the middle of the word, showing Students as central and intrinsic to any educational vision.

The P’s, representing **the people**, are in a polygon with different length sides, symbolizing the diversity and strength of the group including students, parents, teachers and community. The polygon is able to expand while maintaining its strength of structure. It is directly connected to the vision. It also includes the professional development system, which is within the culture circle.

The S triangle stands for 1) **strategies**, and 2) **tactics** evolved from the mission, and related **operational decisions**. The strategy triangle is structured around the people, not as a constraint but as a support structure. Strategies would also include curricular and instructional decisions.

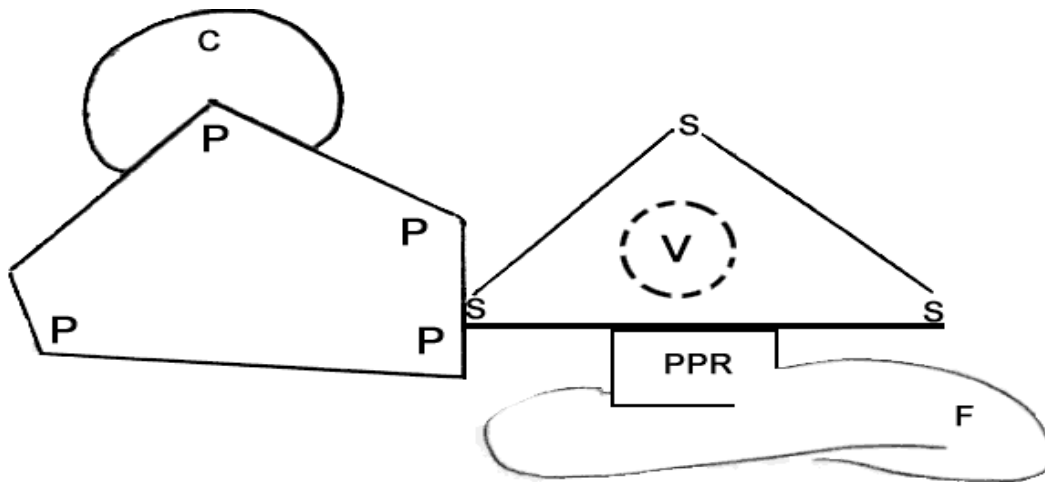
The F stands for the **financial structure**. Its symbol is fluid and encompasses the strategy, people and vision. Financial stability is required as a useful tool with which to obtain resources, training, high-quality personnel, and so forth. The finances sphere strengthens the entrepreneurial spirit by providing choices, and expands the creative work of the shared vision.

The **culture circle** includes the environment, atmosphere and climate. The culture not only develops from, but also supports the vision, people, financial expansion and policy development. The various elements move within the culture circle and are not constrained by it. Agreements of how things should be done are included in the culture circle. Professional and personal responsibilities emanating from the People polygon are expanded in the scope of the Culture circle.

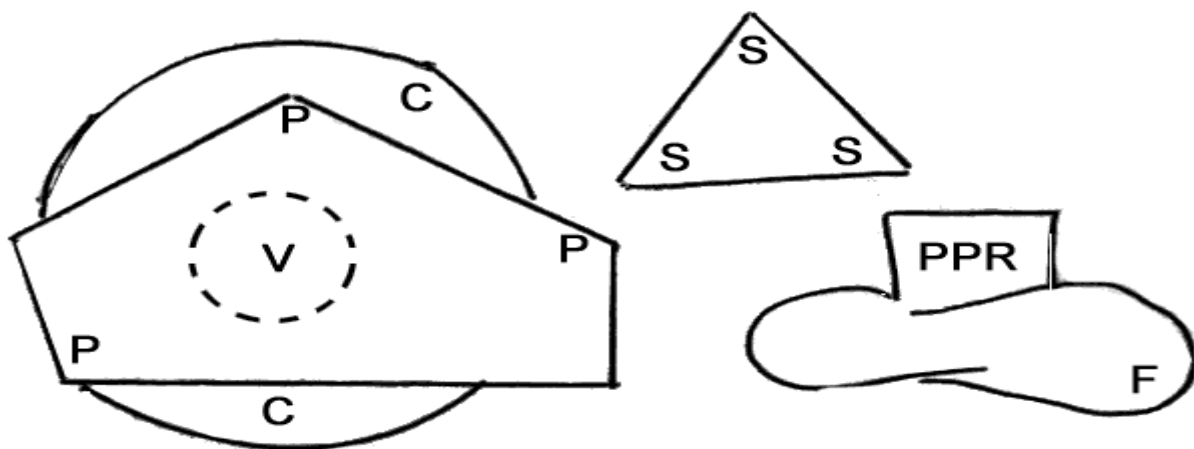
Finally, the PPR box stands for **policies, procedures and rules**, the operational decisions of the enterprise. This box can shrink as agreements expand.

The leader is responsible for all of these components in the tangram.

If the tangram picture of the organization that is emerging from the middle school team looks like this,



It is a very different school from a tangram that looks like this:



In this “tangramic” type of graphic representation, the stance and approach of the leader also becomes evident. For example, a leader who puts more effort on *strategy* may not be available in the classrooms, or with the teachers or parents or in the mix of the day, as he/she is spending the majority of time assessing the so-called client relationship and competitive “market” or may be analyzing management activities. Another leader may be emphasizing *design and implementation* control systems and applying pressure to ensure that these control systems remain as designed. Or, yet another leader may focus on *developing human assets* as primary and is developing the people as a competitive advantage. Each style can have its benefits and its detractions. If the four diamond points of courage, ethics, vision, and reality (Neenan, 2002) are not in balance and given equal attention, or if the logos takes over the ethos and pathos of the school or the pathos pushes out the logos (reference

Chapter 1), the Tangram Balance can help to uncover this imbalance for the purpose of systemic change. The Tangram Balance is a useful yet simple tool that may be used as part of systems thinking. It may also integrate key points of other models and other components. In seeking out visual representations about the school using the Tangram Balance Model, leaders may uncover misconceptions they may hold about the school organization or beliefs that differ from others in the school. The Tangram Balance essentially helps to define a pervasive mental model that requires reflective action. Essentially, the Tangram Balance helps all in the community to share their perceptions in order to obtain a common vision and language about the purposes of the school.

Using the Tangram Balance, we see a graphic representation of complex ideas in an easy-to-understand form. The picture does not need words in order for the mental model to be understood. Individuals in the school who have become familiar with the Tangram Balance Model may draw their own representation of the strength, size and connectedness of each of the components. These representations may serve as a launching pad for further discussion, clarification, planning and systemic evaluation. The graphic model may also be used as a tool during the change process, evaluating individuals' conceptions of the impact of change on the whole organization.

Questions that may be used along with the Tangram Balance of mental representations of the enterprise may be posed such as:

1. Looking at the agreed-upon representation, what do we need to do in order to do our individual jobs better?
2. What needs to be moved out of the way or minimized to ensure that Vision is central?
3. What seems to be assuming too large a role or too small a role in relation to the others?
4. Is there any area that seems separate from the whole?
5. Where are there disconnects or overbearing elements?
6. It seems that the K-3 group has a different perception than the 4-6 group. We are part of the same school; why does this seem to be occurring?

In addition, a revised model may be used for evaluating the classroom, as well as the school, and for professional development. The classroom model, or grade-level teams, for example, may include in a Tangram Balance the components of

- Vision and Mission
- Operations and Procedures
- Rapport with Students, Parents, and Community Building
- Academic Focus including time on task
- New curricular innovations
- Effective teamwork

Higher Order Thinking Attention to Special Needs

Discussions may be had between the principal and teacher(s), or between focus groups comparing their Tangram models and using the representations for fundamental examination of coherence. Student achievement data may be added to the representational model during discussions of any needed change process for improving student success.

As mentioned previously, the Tangram Balance model must be used in conjunction with the fundamental purpose and vision of the school enterprise, and from a foundation of trust and respect. In examining the Balance, it's important to remember the fundamental purpose of education is to build capacity in students. We can get sidetracked into thinking something else is more important. The Tangram Balance can be one tool to help the community ask the questions that will uncover "alarm bells" signaling a need to re-focus on the main purpose of the school. Perkins (1992, p. 41) identifies some "alarm bells" in education including

Fragile knowledge (missing, inert, naïve and ritual knowledge)

Poor thinking

The Trivial Pursuit model of teaching

Ability-Centered rather than Effort-Centered learning

Wherever these alarm bells are identified in the fundamental system of the school, it is the leaders' responsibility to address movement immediately toward remediation and resolution. When a leader can clearly identify the strengths of the organization, and approach conflicts and alarms with a methodical approach, "untying one knot at a time," this aids in a strategic and systematic approach. The Tangram Balance approach is just one way to begin the process of looking at the big picture for the purpose of systemic improvement rather than continuing to simply "put out fires." When a leader is able to make visible the mental frameworks of those in the school (students, teachers, parents, community members), he or she creates an enhanced opportunity for deep discussion, uncovering misconceptions, and developing renewed commitment by everyone involved in the school.

Style Instruments

As a leader, the ongoing effort to understand one's own preferences and style of working, thinking, and experiencing data *and* the impact of style in school interactions is helpful. This information helps the leader to examine the effect of personal preference and personal style in the communication process, on perspective, on perception, and even during the faculty evaluation process. Most often, a leader's comfort zone, communication style and ways of perceiving the world define the reactions and actions he or she makes. Unfortunately, sometimes loss of value in persons, ideas, teams or culture occurs due to the belief that the single-focus of the one in charge is the best measure of vision of reality, improvement, and good work. When a leader is developing a team, that leader should be aware of any information that might impact on group dynamics, perception, and individual work preference.

Wheatley (1994) discusses "fields of inference" that can be felt and experienced between people, even when words are in contrast to emotions ("the invisible fields that exert visible influence" p. 50). Other authors such as Stephen Covey (1989, 1994), discuss the importance of seeking to understand prior to being understood, in developing leadership and organizational principles for action. Attention to the component of relationship-building through improved understanding of one's own and other's perspectives, perceptions and communication is important for any leader interested in building a long-lasting and committed team. After all, a leader is only a leader when he or she has dedicated followers.

Instruments that help leaders and potential leaders in the school to open communication and understanding about self and others are useful. The information received and reflected upon should, with reinforcement and continued discussion, transfer to practical application in schools in order to support and enhance varied and important processes of decision-making, recruiting, professional development decisions, teambuilding, and processes of conflict management and conflict resolution.

There are many instruments that are helpful in determining one's personal preference for living, for taking in information, and for giving out information. The list below presents nine annotated resources and instruments that have been used in various ways in school settings. There are several other instruments as well that are useful for determining style and work preference.

Dellinger, S (1989). *Psychometrics: How to use Geometric Psychology to Influence People*. Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

The author of this book explains how shapes help one to reflect on one's own personality type in various situations.

Dunn, R. and Griggs, S. A. (1995). *Multi-culturalism and Learning Style*. Praeger Publishers, 88 Post Road West, Westport, CT.

Rita Dunn created the Dunn Learning Styles Model . This model has been used with students in elementary through secondary settings. In this particular book, she identifies cultural characteristics and learning style differences.

Glanz, J. (2002). *Finding Your Leadership Style: A Guide for Educators*. ASCD: Alexandria, VA.

This book uses a self-survey to determine personal areas of strength in seven defined qualities and in seven universal virtues. The survey is based on the work of William Hare and Gary Null.

Gregorc, A. F. (1998) *The Mind Styles Model: Theory, Principles and Practice*. Gregorc Associates. 15 Doubleday Road, Columbia, CT.

This book explains the Mind Styles Model of perceptual preferences. In this model, there are four distinct preferences: concrete sequential, abstract sequential, concrete random and abstract random.

Gregorc, D. F. (1997). *Relating with Style*. Gregorc Association, Inc. 15 Doubleday Road, Columbia, CT.

In this book one finds the Gregorc style delineator. The four styles mentioned above are explained according to preferences and perspectives in thinking, feeling, attitudes, beliefs, and relationships.

Jensen, E. (1995). *Learning Styles in the 1990's*. Turning Point. 11080 Roselle Street, San Diego, CA.

Learning Styles in the 1990's is composed of three cassette tapes based on information from Witkin's field-dependent and field-independent studies, modality preferences and other aspects of personality.

Keirsey, D and Bates, M. (1984). *Please Understand Me—Character and Temperament Types*. Prometheus Nemesis Book Co, Box 2748, Del Mar, CA.

This is another book using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, but connects it to the Keirsey Temperament Sorter, providing an understanding of temperament types.

Kroeger, O and Thuesen, J. M. (1988) *Type Talk: The 16 Personality Types that Determine How We Live, Love and Work*. Tilden Press; Delta/Dell Publishing: New York, New York.

Type talk is based on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. In the book there is a discussion of the beauty and challenge of differences and suggestions of ways to improve relationships in all areas of life. (also reference Type Talk at Work: How the 16 Personality Types Determine Your Success on the Job, published by Delacorte Press)

Learning Forum, 1725 South Coast Highway, Oceanside, CA.

Learning Forum has effective teacher, student, and administrator training that includes expanding effective tools and patterns of action and thought that positively impact the school and classroom. Within the training programs, learning style and modality preference is specifically discussed with a focus on its effect on teacher practice, student learning, and overall effect in the school.

Myers, I. B with Myers, P. B. (1980, 1995) *Gifts Differing: Understanding Personality Type*. Davies-Black Publishing, 3803 E. Bayshore Rd., Palo Alto, CA.

This book is the foundation of the popular Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator identifies a personal combination of four learning style preferences: Introverted/ Extraverted; Intuitive/ Sensing; Thinking/ Feeling and Judging/ Perceiving. The work is founded on Jung's theory underlying personality types.

Other instruments and resources may be found through library or internet research.

Some schools create style matrices to compile all the different style preferences in the school, and thus to illustrate the existing strengths in the diverse ways of perceiving the world. The information received from these assessments can be invaluable data when referenced by the leader during team formation or when approaching difficult conversations.

“A person cannot do right in one department of life while doing wrong in another department of life.” M. K. Gandhi

Environmental Audit

“What you are doing is speaking so loudly, I can’t hear what you are saying.”

An environmental audit is a useful tool for examining components of environment from the perspective of an “outsider.” The premise of this exercise is that part of culture is reflected in the *physical* environment and thus, that “Everything Communicates” within the environment for good or ill. It is important to note that an analysis of physical environment is distinct from an analysis of the atmosphere and climate of the school; however both are important in culture development.

An environmental audit can be done by anyone. The data derived from this activity is only one component of the school culture, but because it is very visible, it can be a starting point for improving on what the physical environment is saying. The premise of an Environmental Audit or a Culture Audit is to commit working in every way to improve quality in the school. If one hears a resigned voice say, “Well, it’s just the building that’s the problem and there’s nothing we can do about that.” in a school, work can be done to move toward the more positive mental attitude of, “Well, we’ve identified something we can do better, so let’s think out of the box and improve (that) while having some fun together!”

An examination of ways to improve the environment often leads to discussions on improvement in other areas of the school. Beginning with attention to the physical messages, one can smoothly and easily move to consideration of the atmosphere and relationship building that are crucial for embedding a deep culture of understanding and focused work.

Environment is important. Leaders must give their attention and care to the environment, and to promoting the “entrepreneurial spirit” within the environment. There are many examples of schools creating more value through the data received from an environmental audit, even in the face of limited budgets. Environment can be improved by thinking creatively. In one classroom that was extremely hot and close, students painted “stained glass” scenes of landscapes on the windows, then sewed and installed cool-blue curtains (material donated by a parent) in an after-school project, while desks and file cabinets and storage bins were rearranged, and fans were placed in several windows in front of chests of ice to cool things down! Instead of complaining about the temperature and taking no action, there was significant improvement in the comfort of the learning environment. A comfortable environment has been shown to be extremely important to the cultivation of student attention and engagement (reference work by Lozanov, Jensen, Learning Forum). Supportive leadership is clearly needed to support such efforts.

An administrator determined that the playground needed brightness and different activity options, so teachers and students created murals together along with a tiled bench and a garden, and then determined to participate regularly in games together in this refreshed and inviting area. Interestingly, debris and trash diminished along with the activities. This model led to further improvements in the environment. After analyzing the data from an environmental audit in her school, a teacher polished the student desks with lemon polish to freshen up the room's atmosphere that used to smell poorly by lunchtime, and created musical transitions to replace the shouted directions that had occurred before. Yet another administrator and teacher group created a student-led traffic and pedestrian support program. The students received training in communication, an understanding of the overall plan of safety and welcome, special vests and a certificate of leadership after participating in the program. Office workers then took up the challenge in the front office space, ensuring a rotating schedule of "entry-check" which was essentially a mini-environmental audit twice a day. The applications are innumerable, but one needs some objective data and a strategic plan regarding environment so as to focus as a community on key areas in school and in the classroom.

The following questions may be used in their entirety or modified. The data from this audit will present school teachers, leaders, administrators and parents with specific information from which to celebrate as well as to examine opportunity areas for improvement.

The following audit may be used on a school site on a not-for-profit basis. It may not be reproduced for any other purpose without written permission from the author.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT c)

Developed by KSRA, Inc. d/b/a Teacher Training Institute

Date:

School Location:

Auditor:

Comments should be added under each question when possible; additional sheets may be added for impressions or for noting specific examples. Data from this audit should be carefully analyzed. Are there any patterns occurring for commendation or recommendation of change? Can three areas be improved before the next school break with the help of a dedicated group from the school?

I. The First Impression

- A. What is the parking lot saying? Stand at the entrance to the lot and walk through the lot. What is the daily impression one receives from the data one gathers there?
- B. What does the school look like from the streets nearby? Walk around the neighborhood and get an impression from different angles.
- C. How smooth and welcoming is the drop-off procedure? Is the drop-off location near the building or do students have to walk quite a distance to the building, around obstacles or over landscaping? Is there a bottle-neck anywhere?
- D. What is the first thing students see each morning in the grounds?
- E. What is the first thing people see as they approach the building from a distance?
- F. What is the first thing students see as they begin to enter the building? Is this item or area the best reinforcement of the school's purpose, vision and mission?
- G. What signs are predominantly visible in the grounds and on the building? Are the messages therein the messages that promote the primary mission and vision of the school? Are the messages positive? List the messages you perceive.
- H. Are the signs, benches, and other external artifacts clean, bright, and well kept?

- I. Where do visitors park? Is it accessible? What is the first thing visitors see?
- J. Is there graffiti, trash, or other debris visible to those arriving? Where does the debris seem to collect? Why?
- K. Are the grounds in general conveying the impression of freshness and care? If there are garden areas, are they free of weeds? If there are paths, are they free of debris and are the edges well-trimmed? If there is sand, is it brushed off of the sidewalks? Are the bushes and trees in good shape and healthy-looking? Make a list of what is objectively seen in the grounds.
- L. Are there worn paths in the grass, signaling that the existing sidewalks are not the most effective paths for human beings entering the school?
- M. Is there any student work visible from the street, such as a sculpture, garden area, sundial, mosaic, birdhouse, banner, etc? If not, why not?
- N. Where is the school logo and sign in relation to those entering the building? Does it convey a sense of vibrancy, freshness and pride?
- O. Examine the entering procedures, doors, blockages, bottlenecks, and opportunities for pushing or being pushed out when entering.
- P. Examine the area near the flagpole and the flag itself for damage or wear or disrespect.
- Q. Are there any dark or potentially frightening areas? How might they be lightened or eliminated?
- R. Examine any patio area, steps, or plaza for cracks, dirt, debris or inappropriate messages.
- S. Take photographs of the school from different distances. Examine the message. Also, take photographs of areas needing improvement (with the help of students and teachers). (Use the photographs later in before/after comparisons!)

II. Entering the School

- A. Where is the office in relation to the front doors? Is it accessible and clearly marked?

- B. Is the entrance free of debris, messages of lack of care, or simply dull and “saying nothing?”
- C. Where is the waiting area? Is its location welcoming or awkward, for instance being excluded from the area of human contact in the office, or being in a busy, walk-through area? Does it have comfortable and clean seats? Is there any accommodation for younger children coming to the school with the parents? Are there bathrooms accessible to those waiting, or at least signs to bathrooms visible for those visitors?
- D. How long does it take to get recognized at the desk?
- E. What are two adjectives that come to mind to describe the manner of greeting students and parents?
- F. Examine the cleanliness and order of the office area by taking photographs from different angles. Examine the carpet, the file drawers, desk tops, counters, tables, and so forth to see what message is being conveyed.
- G. Examine the artifacts on the desk, on the counter, and near the waiting area chairs. Are the informational items up to date? Is there other helpful information available for those coming to the office such as achievement data, curriculum maps, school maps, summaries of research on literacy, brochures of the school, fresh flowers, bright bulletin boards, etc., or does one encounter old magazines, dog-eared and dirty brochures stuck among other information, dead flowers, or dirty coffee cups? Make a list of what is encountered on a daily basis, for several consecutive days.
- H. Are there any misspellings or incorrect grammar in the office area or in the artifacts?
- I. Are the office desks and computers laid out so that visitors and students are easily seen or are there people behind mini-walls?
- J. What does the bell sound like? Is its sound obnoxious, harsh or acceptable?
- K. What are the entering comments one typically hears in the halls before and after school? Record what is heard from one point in the halls for several days.

- L. How many times is the classroom environment interrupted by announcements in a day?
- M. Listen. Listen with eyes closed to the sounds of the morning and afternoon. What is being heard? Is the impression jarring, unsettling, welcoming, comforting? Make notes on what students, parents and teachers hear.
- N. Smell. What are the odors that are present? Make notes.
- O. Watch. Stand at the door and watch students and parents and teachers entering. What is seen? Make notes.

III. Hallways, walkways, eating places and gathering places

- A. Are passing periods orderly and distinct? If bells or music are used, is the sound welcoming and inclusive or not? Are classroom starting times clearly enforced or not?
- B. Are the comments made by teachers in the halls, parents, office staff, and other duty areas positive and welcoming?
- C. Are the hallways seeming overcrowded or do they have bottlenecks? Is running, pushing, or being pushed, observed in any spaces?
- D. Do the passing areas convey a sense of cleanliness and freshness and order?
- E. Is there student work on display in the halls, eating and gathering places? Is the work refreshed over time?
- F. Is the color of the hallways and meeting places primarily warm or cool?
- G. Does any playground area equipment appear unsafe or very dirty?
- H. Are there positive activity choices for students during free time or gathering time?
- I. Do teachers congregate informally with students during the school day?
- J. Are teachers observed eating in the cafeteria with students?

- K. Are teachers observed playing with students on the playground, outside of duty time?
- L. Do teachers congregate together and is the congregation enthusiastic and positive in regard to students, parents and the school community and ideals?
- M. What is the impression of the teacher's lounge? (Is there a dominant odor? Is there order or disorder? Cleanliness or messiness? Is the refrigerator area clean? Is there a location for making private telephone calls? Is there a bulletin board with positive messages and important information? Is there evidence of humor and support? Is there color, plants, music in the area? Is there comfortable seating? Is the temperature comfortable? How easily accessible are the teacher's mailboxes?) Make specific comments on what is seen and felt.
- N. Is the copier easily accessible and filled with paper? Are there sufficient and varied resources easily available to teachers?
- O. Is there any dirt, graffiti or defacing of walls or other students work observed?
- P. Is there any area in which congregation of students is unobservable by adults?
- Q. Listen. What is heard? Make notes. Are the sounds welcoming, confusing, or threatening?
- R. Watch. Stand in one area of the school and record what is seen. Are certain physical elements of the area encouraging misbehavior or misuse of resources? Is there any area in which there is a conglomeration of "stuff"? Is there any place for students to sit?
- S. What do the drinking fountains look like? Is there gum or are there any other obnoxious items or stains in the fountain? Are the fountains at a convenient height for everyone? Is the water cold and fresh?
- T. Is any food (or drink besides water) accessible throughout the day? Are there clean trash receptacles available? Are there reinforced routines for cleanup with appropriate and available clean-up tools?
- U. Is music allowed in the community areas? If so, what type of music is heard? What is the auditory level of the music?

- V. Do the library and media centers have materials, books, and resources easily accessible? What messages does the room send to those entering?
- W. Listen, smell and watch for several days in the cafeteria. What is noticed that could be improved upon?
- X. Watch playground activity for several days and with different-aged groups of students. What is noticed that could be improved upon?

IV. Classroom environment

- A. Are teachers visible before and after school at the doors of their classrooms or in the hallways?
- B. What is the type of welcome students receive?
- C. What does the doorway and threshold of classes look like?
- D. What is the hallway entrance communicating as the students move from the hallway into the classroom? Is the message coherent with that expressed in the classroom?
- E. What typically is said at the end of class before students leave?
- F. What procedures, routines, agreements and rules are visible and invisible?
- G. What is the lighting like? Is there natural, incandescent or fluorescent lighting? Is there any glare?
- H. Do students appear to have an understanding of the traditions and routines and expected behavior of the classroom and halls?
- I. Are the routines and procedures reinforcing internal control and student responsibility?
- J. Is there color? Where is it expressed? Is it purposeful and effective? Is it distracting and unrelated to the content, skill and purpose of the class?
- K. Is student work displayed?

- L. Are bulletin boards bright and fresh and changing with the content being learned? Do they primarily reinforce content or rules or do they include positive, motivating messages and statements about good character?
- M. Compare different classrooms at the same grade levels for the messages students receive throughout the day. What is being communicated? Is there a coherent message?
- N. How are interruptions handled?
- O. Are there any plants?
- P. Is there music? Is the music appropriate for the task? Is the auditory level appropriate for the room?
- Q. How is music used: for transitions, clean up routines, content focus, not at all?
- R. Are there any animals? If so, is it obvious the animals are well-cared for?
- S. Is there any dominant odor anywhere in the room? Is it pleasing or distracting?
- T. Where are student's personal items stored? Can they retrieve these easily? Are they safe?
- U. Is there any different seating area or seating option for reading or independent work time? If students sit on the floor, are the carpets and pillows and other "comfort" components clean?
- V. May students take off their shoes or wear slippers in the classroom? If they are cold, may they wear jackets? Do all students have access to coats, slippers or other items to increase personal comfort?
- W. Are students allowed jobs and responsibilities?
- X. Is there evidence of character expectations not only through artifacts, posters and so forth, but also through observed actions? Make a list of data about character in action in the classroom.
- Y. How is the room arranged? Can every child see the teacher well?
- Z. Does the classroom appear emotionally, socially and physically safe?

- AA. Are there options for changing seating? Does the teacher have more than one classroom map for different purposes?
- BB. Is there evidence of visual, auditory and kinesthetic presentation?
- CC. Are the movement patterns in the classroom effective and smooth? Can students put their homework in the appropriate place or sharpen pencils, without bothering others or bumping into objects in the way?
- DD. Where is the teacher's desk located in the classroom? How easily do students approach and speak to the teacher with this arrangement? Is there a feeling of barriers or welcome as one approaches the teacher's desk?
- EE. How clean and organized (this does not mean everything put away) is the impression of the room?
- FF. Is there any message dominant at the front of the room? If so, does this message support the mission of the school?
- GG. Is there any "time out" or isolation space? How is it used? What is the environment saying to the student in that space and to other students outside of that space?

These are a few of the types of questions that should be addressed in an environmental audit. In short, what interfering "noise" can be identified in the system of the school? What erosion is seen in any part of the environment? What positive effects of the mission and vision are evident? Themes from the audit can be used to increase awareness, and as part of a positive effort to make everything communicates well to everyone at all times.

MISSION and VISION and Tools for Making Progress

What is the difference between vision and mission?

Vision is a statement of a preferred future. The vision stretches the present mission to a lofty level. The vision can expand the heart and energy of the school and might even be defined as an ongoing “Heroic Quest.” The preferred future is always before the eyes, mind and heart, just out of reach and requiring those in the school to stretch just a bit further. A vision will be a general statement of the actualized mission. Leaders reinforce the mission by continual shared attention to the big, essential questions of purpose.

Mission organizes the school’s focus and scope; it states the school’s purpose clearly, and it provides a reference point for choices. In creating a mission, the work involves identifying essential tasks, selecting courses of action, planning for ongoing training and dissemination of information, reasoning, systemic understanding, identification of constraints and risk, and comprehension and communication of and during the change process. A mission should deal with the many aspects: the social aspects of the school, the economic, the psychological, and what Covey calls the spiritual, all of which include a clear focus on the benefit to children and thus to society. A mission should include all stakeholders. A mission includes both ends and means, not just ends. A motto may arise from the mission to make the key of the mission easier to remember, but the mission itself should become the “law” of the school organization and the touchstone for crucial decisions.

A clear understanding of the vision and mission of the school by all in the learning community is crucial. From this understanding, one can move into the “space” between control and freedom in the organization, the space from which, with good leadership, a culture of *embedded ethical behavior* may arise. After the school has developed a complete and focused mission to define core values to which all in the community buy-in, departments, teams and individuals may also develop and write their own mission statements that correspond to the overall mission of the school but that also give priority to specific areas over which the departments, teams and individuals have direct control. For instance, in a school where a major focus of the mission is specifically directed toward high literacy standards for all students, the first grade team might write a first grade mission that incorporates objectives for first graders addressing reading and writing, and ensuring coherence with the kindergarten and 2nd and 3rd grade goals.

Due to the nature of school and the many events that occur on a daily basis, most school principals are of “two minds.” The manager-mindset of any school leader focuses primarily on objectives and operations, on rules and law,

on finances, defined outcomes and personnel, and smooth daily, weekly and monthly operations. When the focus is on maintaining smooth daily operations, inspect and control strategies; rules, rewards and consequences, or even dependence on a pleasing personality may be employed as tools to smooth operations. The leader-mindset, on the other hand, focuses more on mission and vision. The mindset of the leader creates the entrepreneurial spirit of internal and intrinsic accountability, increases motivation and feedback systems, and constantly addresses the questions with the team of how things might be done better, in order to achieve the mission and vision. The principal leader must be willing to expand his or her personal comfort zone wider in both management and leadership arenas. Interestingly of course, leadership and management are not two distinct activities. An excellent leader includes the characteristics of an excellent manager. Both are required for achievement of the mission. As was mentioned in Chapter 1, the four-point diamond metaphor created at Neenan Archistruction must have all points to be a real diamond. In addition to the necessary ethics, the courage and vision of the leader must also have the reality view of the manager.

The leader should be involved in data analysis and creating snapshots and wider-lens pictures of the status of the school in relation to its mission. The leadership in a school should also be perceived as shared; for example, an excellent first grade teacher who has all of her students reading at grade level is a leader. The 10th grade science teacher, who engages the students with exciting lessons, is a leader. The principal can't replace their work with his or hers and all are important to the whole system

Continuing the discussion on the importance of understanding and developing systems, Dr. Deming, developer of the idea of total quality management and promoter of systemic thinking, developed a "system of profound knowledge." This systemic view can be applied to schools and may help leaders to understand the complexity of the system and the need to address the whole system. Schools work well when there is alignment and coherence between one's own values and beliefs about what is important, and those of the school.

In the system of profound knowledge, there are four primary competencies (reference Sholtes, 1998 for more explanation). All in the school must understand disparity between the preferred system, structure, and present mindset of "the way things have always been done," and think in terms of systemic effects rather than individual pieces in isolation. Leaders in the system must see the **context** of work as well as the **flow** of all activities. In systems-thinking, people are encouraged to examine the system rather than seeking to blame an individual for a breakdown in the system. Perhaps the problem at hand lay not in the individual teacher, but in the entire system of the hiring process, the training process, or gaps in the development of a culture

of expectations, Systems thinking provides a larger scope for long-term and deep improvements.

The second competency of the system of profound knowledge (Scholtes 1998) includes *a theory of knowledge* which includes deep understanding of learning, knowledge and improvement. Everyone involved in the system is committed to learning more and doing better together. Everyone knows what needs to be done and is dedicated to doing it.

According to Scholtes (1998), *psychology* must also be considered in systems thinking, including how to help people understand and apply principles of intrinsic motivation, trust, motivation and morale. It includes developing professional relationships for the purpose of engendering professional responsibilities and a shared “covenant” (to use Sergiovanni’s term).

It is necessary for all in the school learning organization to understand causes of special variation in data, such as with standardized test results, and how to respond effectively. Knowledge of variation also means gathering and using various data for the purposes of student achievement and school improvement.

When a leadership cadre does not understand the difference between change and improvement, interventions are introduced into the system based on personal idealism or preference, rather than on a systemic analysis and pilot testing. Any changes provide optimism and enthusiasm, but they may not provide long-term improvement. “Leaders are plagued by thought without action or, more commonly, action without thought.” (Scholtes, 1998, p. 47).

Quote for Reflection:

“When mores are sufficient; laws are unnecessary. When mores are insufficient, laws are unenforceable.” S. Durkheim

With both management-thinking-and-action, and leadership-thinking-and-action, there should be clear program goals in place. For a leader, “control” can be the fostering of strong internal networks of communication and responsibility, the use of regularly-gathered data; a high level of inclusion and low levels of confusion and conflict (Stewart, Prebbles and Duncan 1997). In short, in designing the framework for excellence includes clear and consistent systemic awareness and monitoring:

- ❖ Long and short-term objectives should be aligned with vision and mission.
- ❖ Professional development and training should be aligned with the objectives.

- ❖ Feedback systems and monitoring systems (preferably internal and team ones) should be integrated

In the AASA (American Association of School Administrators) Standards and Skills, and in the ISLLC (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium) Standards, the following comments are made about the crucial nature of leadership and vision.

From ISLLC Standards: *“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” and “advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.”*

From AASA Standards and Skills: *“An effective school leader has the following attributes: visionary leadership, including creating and communicating a vision-centered on the success of all children and youth.”*

As a school leader, one should reflect on these standards and examine specific examples of meeting them or not meeting them, then make plans for refining the vision, communicating the vision, and implementing the elements that build the vision. The Baldrige National Quality Program is one very comprehensive approach to building a school of excellence. Its organizational system helps leaders evaluate their current status and plan for future and ongoing improvement. There is a ten-step self-assessment program; criteria for action planning; categorical team development, in this extensive and intensive process. The Baldrige program may be one model a school would choose to analyze and advance its effect (Baldrige National Quality Program; National Institute of Standards and Technology, US Department of Commerce).

In seeking to advance the mission of the school by using all resources effectively and tracking progress in specific areas, the design and use of the following tools should be taught to teachers and students, to give all in the learning community a picture of the current situation, as well as a picture over time of growth and development.

A bar chart. A bar chart presents data at a moment in time. Bar charts can be used for individual, classroom or school numerical data. Standardized test scores are often accessible in bar graph format, comparing different grade levels in a content area, for example.

A histogram. A histogram is an illustration of the distribution of related items on a continuous measure, such as student annual yearly progress in content and skill areas. Bars touch each other to represent the continuum under which all scores are found.

A third tool is a **pareto chart**. A pareto chart notes frequency of events, or cumulative impact of events. For instance, a pareto chart might be used to analyze which academic areas are causing the most trouble for 5th graders, and then if mathematics is identified, which areas of 5th mathematics are also causing students difficulty.

Another tool can be a **“big picture” dashboard**. A “School System Dashboard” is a model initially defined by Meyer (1994). Conzemius and O’Neill (2002) refined the model to focus on schools. They actually placed gauges with a five point scale for each gauge, on the “dashboard.” These gauges are then “rated” using various survey data, and are updated periodically. The gauges a school might define as key areas include 1) parent satisfaction, 2) teacher and staff satisfaction, 3) student satisfaction, 4) a gauge for each grade-level skill area (for example, 3rd grade reading, 3rd grade mathematics, 3rd grade writing); other content areas can be added depending on the school’s own dashboard design. Other gauges are also included on Conzemius and O’Neill’s model: 5) hiring, 6) budgeting, 7) purchasing, 8) program development, 9) staff development, 10) labor relations, 11) school improvement, 12) strategic planning, 13) per pupil spending, and there are blanks for other focus areas. The actual dashboard is not reproduced here, for each school can determine its own vital areas the leader(s) of the school need to review and keep an eye on improving. The dashboard idea is yet one more way of getting the “big picture” for all in the community.

Matrices are other tools that can be created to increase the effectiveness of strategic planning. A matrix, for example, might be used to compile teacher skills and strengths followed by any gaps which are then used in professional development planning. Teachers might also be encouraged to analyze their assessments for variety in thinking skills. For example, several assessments in a unit might be listed down the left column. On the top title bar, different types of thinking and recall can be listed, for instance, *factual recall, analysis, comparison, evaluation*. The teacher can then see in one picture whether he or she is creating assessments with one type of thinking or if there is an attempt to move students to higher levels of interaction with content. Matrices may be used for a variety of information evaluation, such as to show a variety of individual student achievement data in a classroom.

A student profile is developed from data from several assessments. The data results are compiled onto one data print-out that can follow each individual student over time, and can be used by teachers in planning strategic lesson design.

Yet another tool involves defining information from several **criterion-referenced tests** that are connected to objectives and standards and benchmarks to determine numbers of students achieving proficiency in the various content areas. This data can be created in several forms, but there should be some representation of the desired situation compared to the existing situation. This data should then be used not only for administrative analysis, but the information should be an active part of team planning with the mission and objectives in the forefront of the process. In individual classrooms, data tools like those above can be combined in the assessment plan with other ones such as performance assessment or portfolio development.

With any of the aforementioned tools, analysis must be followed by a) acknowledgement of what is working well and plans to extend it as well as continued b) detailed planning, c) the creation of goals and a timeline, d) benchmarks that relate to the goals, and e) any necessary training. Without the analysis and follow-up, the tools become interesting but ineffective. A systemic approach to school development should be integrated to optimize performance. In a school organization, it is very important to realize that *not one* of the tools for gathering quantitative data can be used with focused interventions to any substantial and long-term effect, without addressing the entire system of skill set, knowledge, feelings, perceptions, background ability, and motivations of those directed with implementing the changes. Each part in the system affects every other part especially over time. Mental models must be uncovered as processes for improvement are being developed. Leadership juggles all of the pieces of transitional and transformational system-building as some fall into place and others are still in the air. During this process of juggling, feedback must be continual.

Hewlett-Packard in Ft. Collins, Colorado, is one company of many that implemented a process of PDSA. PDSA is a process that means PLAN, DO, STUDY, ACT and is based on Dr. Deming's work on total quality management. PDSA is a recursive and cyclical process, ongoing and analytical. It sounds simple, but it requires constant attention. A teacher can begin at the *doing* of something (especially on a small scale), then *study* the effects of the doing and act differently (perhaps expanding the scope of the doing or polishing components of the process of doing). A teacher might be involved in *planning*, but then must *do* something. After doing, that teacher must *study the effect of doing*, and then must make decisions and follow-through with *actions*. The process begins again. Theory and practice are entwined. Each of the touch-points must be considered so as to eliminate backlogs in the improvement process or to avoid false learning curves based on hope and supporting personal preference of a certain change regardless of level of improvement for students. The PDSA process can move a staff or school from a blind spot or what Dr. Deming might term "unconscious incompetence" in an area of student

achievement, to a conscious and competent level. The PDSA process is yet another tool leaders can use in the change and improvement process.

Longer-term views of the status of the school can include not only the numerical data gathered and compiled using the tools above, but also other information that influences results, such as the number of teachers teaching outside of their content specialty, inadequate resources, behavior problems, lack of good thinking skills or social skills in certain segments of the student population disrupting the learning environment. The questions “Why is this happening?” “What is our primary purpose here?” and “What can we do better?” should be asked regularly, and plans for action research should be implemented with results evaluated on a regular basis using qualitative and quantitative tools. During the team improvement discussions, it’s important that **alterable variables** should be the focus rather than unalterable variables (such as poverty or home situation). The leader must be vigilant to stop justification of low performance based on inalterable variables from becoming the norm. In some schools, such as the one in which I was principal, a Japanese term called MUDA is part of the common language of the school, and is used to define “that which consumes resources but gives no value.” *Part of the improvement process is to identify MUDA everywhere and work to eliminate it.*

Another document that allows smooth operations is the focused development of an operations manual. Leaders must have clear processes and procedures. In an operations manual, there should be a section for each of many procedures including (but not limited to); registration, enrollment, attendance, withdrawal, beginning and closure of year, recruiting, records management, business audit, hiring, termination, technical support, ordering, inventory, grant preparation and follow-through, business systems, personnel benefits, assessments and parent communications. Each procedure area should have a document stating

1. Purpose of the procedure
2. Relation to any other procedures
3. Procedural steps and references
4. Who is responsible
5. Timelines and when procedures are monitored
6. When management reports are due, and any connection to public reports

Such a manual supports the leadership position by defining key operations for any future leaders as well as providing adequate coverage of crucial areas and a monitoring plan.

Finally, one other tool for developing good communication and monitoring progress toward goals can simply be **a managed agenda** for meetings. Meetings that are unfocused, seemingly purposeless, full of disconnected trivia or that always run over allotted time, speak of disrespect. One tool to improve

this situation is to ensure that mundane communications are put into another communication format such as a daily or weekly memo, and that vital areas are the focus of person-to-person meeting in addition to general presentations and focused discussion forums. During meetings, the participants must be on time, thus showing respect for the community, and the participants' time must also be respected. An agenda should include the meeting goal(s), and have easy-to-read columns noting

- a) the time set for each part of the meeting,
- b) what the item focus is,
- c) who is presenting each part of the meeting, and
- d) what the outcome goal is hoped for.

Any presentation should not come to the table with complaint or criticism unless it includes a proposal for improvement. Any proposal should be shared at least one week prior to a meeting with all involved, so as to optimize the meeting time. Any other expected outcome or goal should be defined in advance to eliminate complaints from those who have not had time to think through a process, change, or a desired outcome. An example of such a meeting agenda might be:

Meeting Agenda

Time	Item	Who	Goal
3:30	CHECK IN and "GREAT STUFF"/CELEBRATIONS		
3:35	Behavior in upper school hallways	Tim	Identify three ideas to improve the situation (proposal sent out last week)
3:45	Increasing parent participation in monitoring homework	Sara	Design a two-way communication process using email and colored notes; plan to evaluate effectiveness and to share results with upper grades
4:03	Whole-school literacy	Marc	Handouts of standardized tests data, action research teams formed at grade levels
4:34	Improving the awards assemblies	Zeze	Coming with two ideas for early literacy development; wanting more feedback
4:50	DISCUSSION CHECK OUT		

A five minute check in and check out period can be included for participants to make brief comments on other things going on in the school that might need immediate attention, and to comment on the progress being made in the meeting. Check-in and check-out times are part of the meeting; they are not

cushions of time to wander in late. The meeting agendas can also be kept in a notebook for reference and record-keeping through the year.

Schools may think that they are actually following a process of continual improvement, but when certain administrators and teachers are asked for their use of baseline and growth data, application of written benchmarks, or even cooperatively designed agreements of behavior for meetings, none exist. When asked about focused training for the priority areas, they often appear weak. When asked about MUDA and its elimination, unalterable variables and complaints about people or programs become the focus. When this type of response occurs, the learning organization is fooling itself about what it is doing and may feel “wobbly” and off-course. Other reactions then often follow, such as imposition of control from administration resulting in aversion, undermining comments or actions, or frustration from teachers, which are typically dispersed in some way into the student experience. Interestingly, when schools are not aware of their data-based status, there is often a desire in those required to improve, to maintain a status quo, interpret change negatively, make excuses, feel threatened and/or feel frustrated. None of these reactions are helpful or productive.

A clearly defined governance structure is critical as a school moves toward achievement of its mission and onward toward the grand vision over time. In *The Dance of Change*, Senge et al (1999) reminds us that the verb “to govern” comes from the Greek, meaning “to steer a ship.” (p. 366). The idea of steering a great ship is a helpful analogy. Senge et al. (1999) discusses the interrelated processes of governance in this process. If the leader does not attend to all of the processes of governance, understanding their systemic nature, and understanding that each aspect of autonomy is necessarily somewhat limited within the construct of the school, motivation and enthusiasm may decrease while cracks may start to appear in the cultural foundations where the stress of blame, defensiveness or isolation increases. More top-down decisions then must be made in order to maintain stability and “save the ship,” which then may confuse the previous framework of values and operations based on trust. The leadership of a school must define and communicate the tolerance toward expanded decision-making authority and entrepreneurship. Leadership must also assess effectiveness continually and plan for smooth integration of new and effective ideas into the cross-functional existing system. The process of leadership should be that of working on increasing responsibility and trust, not simply implementing more controls.

- As the school leader works with any decision-making group, there should be
- a) clear accountability,
 - b) a process for expanding the members’ capacities and understandings of all aspects underlying the groups areas of control, and
 - c) systematic and regular feedback systems.

Most importantly, the governing ideas should be clear and aligned with the vision. “The design of governing ideas is the most important aspect of organizational design.” (Bill O’Brien, cited in *The Dance of Change*, p. 375).

Reminder: As a leader works to refine the entire school system, it is important to keep in mind that one of the principles of systems thinking is that *a leader cannot optimize the performance of the entire system by focusing on optimizing the performance of individual pieces*. Though this might seem counter-intuitive, when something is going wrong, the whole system should be examined before any important change occurs. For example, a school decided to add more electives to the curriculum and to change the grammar program. It did not carefully assess the impact on the whole system, including such things as analyzing the effectiveness of the existing grammar program on student learning and writing, giving careful attention to student schedules and potential conflicts, overlap of skills in the writing and grammar program, necessary teacher training or resources, individual perceptions about change, impact on student remedial or enrichment activities that needed to be changed. The resulting frustration was surprising to the principal and the result was a negative reaction toward some teachers by administration, when they attempted to bring forward concerns.

Without a process of systemic reflection, the professional culture of learning won’t be as effective in the long run. Rather, for a leader to examine the whole picture of how every activity supports the whole as a vital part or not, and how every teacher supports and buys into the mission, then followed by focused forums for designing coherent improvement, would be a better place to begin. All systems have both formal and informal systems of communication that are operating all the time and during all processes of change. “The more closed and guarded the formal network, the greater the reliance on the informal network.” (Sommers and Payne, 2001, p. 13)

The Change Matrix included in this manual clarifies the importance of addressing the various components of change holistically, and understanding the effects on the whole when part is missing or unaddressed. Learning Forum, a company that provides Quantum Learning training for businesses and schools, uses the metaphor of the orchestra in developing a system in which “everything speaks” and “everything is on purpose.” The metaphor of the orchestra is especially appropriate when thinking of the systems of effective and excellent schools.

Patterns and trends in every area of the school should be evaluated *continually*. Too often, schools may seek a patchwork approach to improvement, and though leaders may be energetic, they may not be systemic in their approach. A principal might be interested in having teachers evaluate their assessments using a taxonomy; a board member might be interested in implementing a new writing program that is based on a different philosophy of

learning than has been in place; a teacher group might have a list of ideas for improving the behavior in the middle school, and a parent group might want Spanish and Latin to be added as electives, and so on and on. Other events require other immediate solutions.

In order to avoid quick fixes or patchwork systems, a regularly-scheduled ongoing focused faculty meeting might include uncovering perceptions and anxieties about potential impending changes. In order to keep the “big picture” in front of everyone’s eyes, a list of current and ongoing changes should be compiled and evaluated for coherence with the mission and the strategic plan. These changes might include new ideas, practices and training that sound good, programs that are in place but need attention, a new program that is going to be put into place, a new scheduling idea being considered, a revised report card format, the development of a team to analyze math and science achievement, new technology to learn and use, some ongoing action research, meetings to evaluate skills and standardized test data and make recommendations, reevaluating old programs that aren’t working or aren’t being implemented, *muda* that needs eliminating, and so on. It’s often surprising to administration to see how much change is actually occurring. Teachers often see the big picture of all of these changes and their potential effect on their own practice, and yet may not have clarity on implementation or evaluation timelines, purposes, time commitment and so forth, and yet still are expected to do all of the ongoing activities, planning, grading, lesson development, and student achievement monitoring and lesson modification that are part of their jobs. Anxieties interfere with performance, and may impede the work needed for vital priorities. In addition, the less important “many” ideas, however good, might overcome the **vital few** ideas.

It goes without saying that carefully-crafted policies must be in place, shared with all parties, discussed and adhered to. Policies should cover grievances procedures, Board relations and responsibilities, student attendance, discipline, homework, grading, and scheduling, among others. Without policies in place that the community agrees to follow, the leader is at a huge disadvantage for making decisions fairly and consistently.

Another idea to help in the process of using tools well in movement toward the vision would be to have focused discussion forums and to use a flow chart, a decision matrix, or a timeline with benchmarks designed in accord with the annual and multi-year strategic plan. Whatever tools are used, they must be used within the context of the entire design of the system and consider the many components including relationships, ethical approaches, the vision and mission, skills and training systems, the developed constitution for meetings, classroom decisions, philosophical orientations toward skill building, environmental considerations, finances, mental models, cultural considerations and effective leadership, among other components. Documents are helpful in this process but in the work to create documents, the leader must be vigilant in

ensuring that the big picture and visionary purpose remain at the forefront of all design activities. The creation of documents and timelines can give the impression of doing something important, and thus might take over the primary focus and time and energy given to the actual work of raising student achievement for awhile.

Mager (1992) suggested that “management by walking around” be part of the strategic approach to improvement. Though MBWA may seem simplistic to some principals and school leaders, it is a very helpful way of determining what is actually going on; it is a way to gather impressions and qualitative data, of identifying areas for support, of locating obstacles for teachers and students that could be removed without a formal improvement planning process, and thus simply being a visible part of the improvement process. MBWA should be connected directly to any document-formation, policy formation or administrative decision-making. In short, the key questions for a SMART school should be in the forefront: *What is our mission and how are we getting there? Where are we now? How can we improve? What muda needs to be eliminated to make way for the important things? How will we all realize our mission and vision?*

Focused and Holistic Supervision

Supervision of the mission necessarily involves supervision of the work of the personnel. Beyond mere supervision, an excellent leader encourages the heart and the spirit to eliminate that which consumes resources but gives no value, and to increase value and contribution through the entrepreneurial spirit of useful service to others, most particularly and most importantly, students. In a focused and holistic supervision model, leaders may consider using a model like that advocated by Campbell et al (1987) which identifies specific supervisory techniques in five growth areas. Growth areas here defined by Campbell, Cordis, McBeath and Young (1987) are

1. The ego dimension
2. The content knowledge dimension
3. The level of conceptualization dimension
4. The interpersonal communication dimension
5. The teaching process dimension

Each of these areas should be defined and may be subdivided. (Though the framework of holistic supervision is taken from the Campbell et al. work, definitions of the levels of dimension in this model are somewhat modified from those advocated in the original article.) In the **ego dimension**, school leaders examine with teachers “the ability to take responsibility for one’s behavior, concern for others, ability to respond positively to feedback, ability to discuss one’s teaching objectively and honestly, ability to reach out and facilitate growth in others...” (Campbell, Cordis, McBeath, Young, p. 10)

The **content knowledge dimension** would focus attention on the knowledge and understanding of skills and content, the knowledge of instructional delivery systems specifically related to content areas, the ability to increase habits of mind in a discipline, the ability to go beyond a text and engage motivation and interest, the ability to answer questions about content as well as the ability to formulate and follow the development of answers to essential questions, and the ability to reformat knowledge.

The **level of conceptualization dimension** requires the ability to analyze one’s own teaching and to identify problems in student learning with plans for specific improvement, alternative behaviors, necessary skill development, and application of theory.

The **interpersonal communication dimension** includes the ability to communicate completely, clearly, and well, with a diverse group of people in the entire school community. This dimension would also include attention to the ability to develop parent and student communication, student rapport, an effective classroom team, collegial communication, and so forth.

The **teaching process dimension** attends to “the ability to *use* a variety of instructional skills and strategies appropriately and effectively.” (Campbell, Cordis, McBeath, Young, 1987, p. 10). Instructional delivery is also mentioned in the content knowledge dimension, but more specifically related to understanding the many effective ways to deliver specific content to enhance understanding. Teaching process as a dimension is regular use of effective, research-based methods to engage the student’s heart, mind and motivation in learning. It is an extension of content process, as it includes skill, behavior, and all the other components of teaching.

Most schools have designed some sort of evaluation or appraisal process that identifies expected teacher skill in general areas such as *instructional delivery, pedagogy, presentation of content or skill, use of assessments, extra duties*, and so forth. The advantage of using a holistic model in regular supervision is that the aforementioned general areas are subsumed in the dimensions that cover a wider area for identifying and developing professional excellence.

In attending to **the ego dimension**, and following the Campbell, Cordis, McBeath and Young (1987) suggestions, a leader may design a continuum from *insecure* through *secure* with associated definitions, space for administrator notes on observed performance, and determine where each staff member is on the continuum. From this knowledge, the leader can more specifically pinpoint and address needs of ego that must be attended to for a teacher to become more masterful and focused on the right things. For instance, if a teacher has difficulty responding to feedback, communication skill training, simplifying tasks, or implementing practice fields might be designed to help the teacher understand the value of feedback for improving practice so that both professional relationships and student learning may be enhanced.

The **dimension of content knowledge** might also include a continuum from *little knowledge of subject/grade level* through *masterful curricular knowledge* again with associated descriptions and space for administrator notes on observed performance. For instance, moving up from “Little Knowledge of Subject/Grade Level” on the continuum to “General Knowledge,” the teacher can teach and engage students but not deeply or masterfully in any area; often personality or extrinsic reinforcements are used to engage student attention and interest; and teacher may be very text- or materials- dependent. Moving up the continuum to “Primarily Academic Knowledge,” the teacher has a good knowledge of subject matter but less ability to organize that knowledge effectively for teaching and/or may not have taken time to develop rapport. Moving further up the scale to “High Level of Content Knowledge and Delivery,” the teacher illustrates a good grasp of the subject as well as how to make the subject meaningful and accessible for students; questions extend knowledge; examples and illustrations are varied and the teacher has a large repertoire of

personal understanding and skills that are continually being refined in the content area(s). At the top of the scale in the “Masterful Curricular Knowledge” category, the teacher goes beyond using materials, to scholarly knowledge, regularly producing and designing curriculum within and among subject areas, and smoothly adapting to specific needs.

The **level of conceptualization** the teacher holds might be identified as above, but on a different continuum, moving from *dependency* (on other’s ideas), to *conformist (preferring to follow along)*, *independent and ultimately to interdependent*. Descriptors would also be developed to better clarify each area of this continuum.

The **teaching process** dimension as mentioned previously, concerns the automatic use of effective instructional delivery, rapport and wonder-building, use of specific skills and strategies. The scale for measurement of progress may include a continuum such as: *unaware, aware but not using consistently, awkward, competent and internalized*.

When the formal appraisal process occurs, much data has already been gathered through the year, many discussions have been had between teacher and principal and between teacher and teacher, thus creating a richer base for the appraisal process. For the purpose of improving practice and ensuring quality, the supervisory process gives attention to the level of development the teacher has attained in each of these areas to stimulate further growth. For example, collection of specific data, specific feedback, planning and practice programs, knowledge and skill-building networks, coaching, accurate information on expectations and progress toward those expectations, are tools for stimulating further growth in each area. The principal would be expected to *have a strategic plan* for using many of these tools within the process of holistic supervision and professional development planning. A continuum of expected development is a visual aid to the teacher and the leader in moving toward the goal of masterful teaching. A supervision model that includes the aforementioned components will tend to uncover gaps in knowledge and skill, and gaps in interpersonal and interdependent systems of professional communication and responsibility. This type of supervision can also improve the collaboration process by understanding that unfocused collaboration may be caused by more than a lack of a specific skill. A weakness in one area can “short circuit” other areas. When a weak area is uncovered, specific attention can be given and training be designed to improve the learning or to help that new teacher. This tool of holistic supervision can expand the appraisal system and may be used in addition to other evaluation checklists or incorporated into existing objectives for teaching. Instructional evaluation forms and processes should be carefully examined to see if the current design is truly helpful to the goal of developing expert teachers in all areas, or if there is something missing

that allows gaps and personal weaknesses to negatively impact the entire school enterprise.

WORKSHEETING in the Change Process

With the vision clearly in mind, with organizational perceptions from the Tangram Balance and other sources available, with annual and long-term objectives defined, with student progress data before the eyes, and with holistic supervisory data at hand, leaders can “worksheet” progress, noting changes, improvements, and areas still needing work in order to ensure that the important work is not relegated to that which is urgent or less important.

One way of worksheeting progress is to create divisions either for a year or several years. Categories might be similar to the following:

1. Evidence of the process of moving away from a state of self-protection or the status quo (perhaps leadership notes might include here data on student achievement in all grade levels, student attendance after implementation of a program which was or was not successful, work on eliminating that which does not provide value but only increases drain of energy, addressing the real state of things everywhere and not ignoring issues, moving from personal preference and comfort level to a level that is more effective in the classroom, aligning all decisions and activities with the mission and vision)
2. Evidence of confronting the complexity of growth (perhaps notes might deal with how conflict was effectively dealt with; how scheduling problems were resolved, how diversity has increased in the school and what has been done to alleviate any transition challenges, effective or ineffective school program development, persistence in unification, standardized testing requirements coherently integrated with the existing curriculum)
3. Evidence of positive change management (this might include, for example, examining teacher professional development and increasing scholarly study, with its impact on student achievement, evidence of effective interventions on student learning, improvement in teacher leadership, or operational change management)

Other areas for leadership consideration and reflection might also include:

1. Evidence of increasing alliances
2. Evidence of increased insight, skill, and transformation, related to the vision and mission and objectives

Each category includes specific evidence, opportunity for celebration, and areas for improvement and attention. Worksheets provide the big picture of data for the leader and others in the school. It is yet another systemic way of approaching thinking in regard to the communication of important information and ways to problem-solve.

In addition to the supervision process, the principal should be continually aware of personal bias or preference, or even personality conflict, that might interfere with the observation process. A helpful idea is to make time within the evaluation process for regular, honest, personal reflection prior to, during, and after the formal evaluation.

Professional Development within the School System

See failure as a way “to begin again more intelligently.” (Thomas Edison). For schools that hold this paradigm, success is rewarded and failure, because it provides feedback and learning (and which is expected not to recur in the same form), is also appreciated (reference also Learning Forum’s Eight Keys of Excellence). “The professional approach to supervision would hold that teachers develop in their craft by being challenged to reflect on their assumptions about what they are doing and by critiquing those assumptions and practices in collaboration with colleagues. Research and theory on learning and curriculum can be an important addition to that process” (Stewart, Prebble and Duncan, 1997)

In professional development planning, there should be networked links in all academic activities and the overall plan for student achievement. A school leader should ensure that any training, attending of conferences, new program development, or scholarly study directly connects to an individual’s professional development plan, which in turn is clearly related to the school’s 1) vision, 2) mission, and 3) content-and skill-specific objectives for students. The achievement of the professional development plan and its positive effects on student achievement might also be tied to the salary scale and to any performance pay programs. The plan and the mission, vision and student objectives should be able to be laid out visually with bridges easily made between them. Too often, leaders confront training opportunities in a scattershot fashion, looking first at the budget, thinking what can be gotten for the best value of money, and putting either everyone, or large groups, into the same training. In some cases, this approach may be appropriate, but in many cases, this is not the best way to approach systematic and strategic knowledge building. There should be a plan not only for directed and focused training and feedback systems, but also for sharing of gained knowledge. For example, one or two people may have gained significant knowledge through special training or conferences, but have no way to share that knowledge with others to allow for these new and rich sources of knowledge to embed themselves into various parts of the learning culture. Without a way for staff to share new and important knowledge in an ongoing and professional way with others, value is lost to the school system. In addition, unless the supervision and appraisal system is connected to the training system, value will also be lost. If a new method for instructional delivery is put into place after extensive training, yet is not connected to appraisal processes, teachers may fairly assume that real value is not seen by administration in the presented program.

Using a matrix for strategic and systematic planning, the leader may examine strengths in knowledge and skill, and opportunity areas for developing knowledge and skill with an eye on the vision, mission and objectives. Priority areas should receive first attention. In analyzing needs, a leader may

graphically lay out what training has been done and in what ways it has enhanced other training, existing programs and ultimately, of course, student achievement. If the budget is tight and the priority areas for the year are literacy and economics, in that year, teachers probably will not be attending wilderness activity programs or math journaling seminars, however interesting and potentially helpful. Whenever possible, networking both within the system and outside of the school walls should consciously and specifically be expanded into the professional development planning process, so as to gain richness of shared ideas, methods and understanding.

There should be a formal plan for dissemination of useful information to everyone in the school who can benefit from it, as well as a follow-up and feedback plan. Sometimes school leaders have specially-defined faculty meetings, regular team focus meetings, practice-fields (in which teachers practice activities with their colleagues, thus minimizing the risk of immediately transferring a new idea to the classroom without practice), teacher peer review, professional discussion forums and so forth. Whatever plan or plans are determined as useful by the school leaders, for disseminating information and ensuring a continuing benefit, they should be formally created and time must be built into the system for their analysis and monitoring.

As the school leaders, board members, teachers and master teachers, parents, students and others involved in developing priority areas work together with professional development ideas in mind, a multi-year plan should be designed, so that training builds on training, so that knowledge expands for the whole community, and so that progress toward the vision, mission and objectives may be benchmarked over time. A temptation is to make a one-year plan, and then to switch the plan or expand the plan to other areas the next year to a different content area, *without everyone knowing the big picture plan and timeline* and how it will impact other change initiatives. Resist the temptation. The school leader should have easily-communicated plans for the various members of the school community to access, so that they too may share in the “big picture” of the system.

Student Assessments and Professional Development Planning

Student assessment data identifies valuable data for professional development planning. In making decisions about assessments, the leader should be especially cautious and strategic. Too often, additional student assessments are added into a system for the purpose of boosting “accountability”, where “accountability” or purpose is not clearly defined. Some schools have added more assessments to programs without evaluating the true effect of existing program assessments and student improvement, seeming to believe that “new is simply better.” Sometimes, purposes are mixed. One way to evaluate the important decision of implementing new assessment of student progress is to ask the following questions and specifically respond in

writing to them (first as the school leader and then with focus groups of teachers and students who will be directly impacted by new assessments). Writing the answers helps to focus the mind and it also provides a visible tool that others involved in the decisions of assessment may also access.

1. What are we trying to assess?
2. Why are we trying to assess this?
3. What assessment are we considering and why is this assessment better than other similar ones?
4. What is the time of administration and length of administration? Does the time of year and length of the test fit in with other testing we are doing AND with the purpose of the assessment (see #7-9 below)?
5. How reliable is the assessment? Does it provide data that we are not able to retrieve in another way?
6. Are we considering end-of-year evaluation instead of regular and varied evaluation and assessment of progress throughout the year on a defined plan? If so, what do we plan to do with this data at the end of the year?

Purposes of assessment:

1. Are we assessing how much content a child retains?
2. Are we assessing skill development and content retention?
3. Are we assessing how much content a teacher covered in a year?
4. Are we evaluating what content pieces need to be increased in percentage of classroom time devoted to them?
5. Are we analyzing how much content or skill areas a teacher failed to teach?
6. Are we looking to identify areas of content mastery that were too difficult or too easy?
7. Are we thinking about an assessment that is measuring the same things as a state or district standardized test? If so, why?
8. Are we seeking information based on expectations of a bell-curve or seeking general trends over time in the general population?

9. Are we seeking longitudinal or short-term data in individual students or groups of students?
10. Could there any bias or distortion in our view of assessment or is there any bias or distortion that should be controlled for in the assessment?

The answers to these questions should provide a foundation from which to evaluate and clarify the purpose, and to widen the discussion base again to the big picture view. Often, a process like this also uncovers misconceptions. One person on an assessment evaluation team might say, “I thought these assessments would tell us more about curricular coverage” while another might respond, “This type of assessment won’t work at all grade levels, so I assumed it was for the middle school where state assessments already address these areas.” It’s important to have these types of questions and concerns surface early rather than late.

To have a data-driven system, the performance decisions and assessments should be tied to results, but the “results” should not be simply end of the year summative data. Unless all students are guaranteed to remain over multi-years with the school and have opportunities to remediate performance and knowledge acquisition, end-of-the-year results won’t provide the ongoing and job-embedded data necessary for improvement and professional decision-making. Regular, on-going summative data should be gathered using various types of assessment tools. Assessments that special education students and other special populations participate in should also be regularly evaluated using many of the questions posed above. Where possible, assessments that follow individual student progress over time should be implemented and carefully monitored by teachers and by the principal.

Assessment is time-consuming and must be determined carefully so that after Assessment decisions are made, everyone involved (including the students) clearly knows the purposes and understands the results (and the desired results) with the accompanying plans for improvement. This information should be documented as well as shared in other ways.

Assessments of teacher professional development and performance should be put into place in the same way. All teachers should understand the vision and the mission, and application of ideas moving toward achieving both. All teachers should understand priority areas, the budget constraints, their part in school priority areas (even science teachers are involved in literacy goals), and how to understand results and longitudinal data for the primary purpose of school improvement and improvement in student achievement in all areas of study.

Examination of assessment should be extended to examination of classroom assessment. For example, Stiggins and Knight (1997) suggest analyzing which assessment method works best for a particular goal. If mastery of content knowledge is the assessment goal, a “right answer” test or essay test may be the best choice; if demonstrating performance skills is the goal, a “right answer” test or essay would not be the best choice. The coverage of content addressed in an assessment should also be representational of the lesson or unit. It is very important to remember that the work of a principal be one of making great teaching possible.

Promoting Fair and Data-Based Teacher Appraisal

In my work with charter school principals, I have run into a few hard-working men and women who, during their first year, and due to the many events and urgent claims on their time, have chosen to put the appraisal and development process for teachers on the back burner. Unfortunately, they then end up doing a rushed formal evaluation prior to contract signing, without having gathered sufficient preliminary data from informal observations and monitoring of training initiatives earlier in the year. Even though a first year charter school principal has many urgent activities to attend to, the principal must remember that the important areas are primary and supercede the urgent calls on his or her time. Teacher professional development is one of the most important areas to which a school leader can attend. The level of expertise of teachers directly impacts student academic achievement more than anything else in the school. If a school leader completes a formal evaluation without prior sufficient comprehensive monitoring of student learning, or without knowing about effective presentations of content and use of skill programs, that school leader is missing a crucial link in the entire framework of teacher professional development, and thus the process may become ineffective or may be perceived as unfair and inadequate. It is very important that the principal have a clear process for appraisal that includes a variety of data gathering and professional development opportunity. The process must be rigorously followed and seen as a priority area in the school. It should allow for feedback, conversations and growth plans, and the process should be shared, understood and perceived as adequate and fair by the teachers impacted by the process.

With the vision of student achievement before the leader's eyes, the appraisal process may include many different tools over time. One way some principals begin is with a matrix that includes a variety of informative data. Appraisal systems must be based on real data, not assumptions or second-hand information. The first source of data should be regular observation of a teacher's field of work, which is of course, the classroom of students. It's important for a school leader to be present in all areas of the school, visible in classrooms, and available to students and teachers. It is recommended that observations occur informally several times during the year, before the formal evaluation process takes place. Informal observations should be accompanied by written documentation of what was observed, and also by dialogue afterward. Some observations should be "drop in" full-period and partial-period ones; others might be pre-scheduled and pre-discussed ones, also full-period, whenever possible. This type of structure leads to a better understanding of classroom practice, effects on students and also provides a fairer system (if one day isn't the best observation, the teacher can know that you will definitely be back several more times). Students should be questioned informally about their learning and student work should be examined. This

type of systemic observation is based of course, on clearly understood use of skills programs, on content objectives, on state standards, on effective instructional methods and school expectations. This type of systemic observation also provides for school leaders to be truly informed of what is happening, and for teachers to be part of the ongoing system of professionalism. Such a program of many observations also helps to avoid any manipulation that naturally occurs in a “one-informal and one-formal-evaluation” type of system (for instance, the case of a teacher preparing more diligently for the planned informal observation than he did for regular classes; or the presentation of a “best lesson” during the formal observation period). Teachers are no different from anyone in that they will want to do their best when their administrator is watching; however, it is important that the administrator work to break this tendency and promote doing the best possible work every day of the year for the students, not the administrator. Less-effective work should have opportunities for remediation and support throughout the year. During a process of regular, varied, and systemic observation, planning for remediation and monitoring results also becomes the administrator’s and teacher’s opportunity.

In addition to regular observation, walking around, discussing what’s happening in the school with various people including the students, having discussions and making plans for professional development with teachers, helping teachers develop capacity and so on, quantitative data can and should be gathered for analysis with the teacher, not only from standardized sources, but also from artifacts from each classroom.

Some examples of various data gathering that might be used in the appraisal process:

1. Look at the number and percent of students at each performance level of standardized tests. What can be determined from disaggregated data?
2. Look at a frequency distribution of assessments from classrooms as well as on observational data from several classroom visits. Do the teacher’s lessons seem directed at the low, middle or high end of the distribution?
3. Examine level of teacher knowledge and skill, as well as the training teachers have participated in and whether it is being transferred adequately. Consider including the components of the holistic supervision model in the appraisal and development process.
4. Examine the student distribution from the grading rubric. Are there specific areas on the rubric that are weaker than others? Is there an area that might need more time for effective instruction and practice?

5. How is prior knowledge assessed and the information used in planning units and teaching? How is schema built for students?
6. What types of assessment are given in the classroom? A table or matrix might be used that includes the focus areas of CONTENT, KNOWLEDGE and FACTS, APPLICATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION, EVALUATION. It might look like this. To the left, the teacher's assessments are listed for the unit.

Specific Content assessment	notes	Knowledge and facts	Application	Analysis and interpretation	Evaluation	other
Spelling test						
Exam on the two novels						
Essay						

Looking carefully at a representative sample of assessment data, the administrator and teacher put checks in representative boxes on the table. This information is discussed, and may also be compared with other pieces of evidence, such as “presentation of information,” “facilitation of the flow of the learning periods” or “types of questions used in discussion,” thus seeking any patterns that show effect in student performance or neglect of areas for improved student performance. Further data may be gathered on the group and from sample students from quizzes, standardized assessments, class participation, attendance, daily grades, and homework samples.

1. Decide cooperatively on the instructional change most likely to cause improvement in student performance.
2. Provide specific and ongoing help to the teacher who is required to implement any changes. Keep communication open as you both continually assess the results.

Other data collection would include data from the teacher, survey data from, or random interviews with students, and survey data from parents.

As was mentioned previously, in the appraisal process, there should be carefully analyzed and clearly communicated documents of the process PRIOR to using it. There should be opportunity to include rationale, and to dialogue about concerns and perceptions. A timeline should be determined with number of observations and formal evaluative statements expected throughout the year, with a period of time set for formal appraisal. Methods of data collection for the appraisal should be shared as well as any performance criteria. Renewal/non renewal status criteria may also be included. A process of developing masterful all-around teachers and/or subject-specific scholars

might also be included as part of the supervision-appraisal-professional development process.

Most appraisal systems include documents specifying performance areas. If the performance appraisal document includes performance areas such as INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING, INSTRUCTION, ASSESSMENT, USE OF METHODS, CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT, PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES, each area should be clearly defined and discussed with all staff prior to the year's beginning. There should also be opportunity for employee comments, employee meetings and a performance summary from which the professional development plan for continuing employees is developed.

A technique called 360 degree feedback would include feedback on performance from multiple sources. To contribute to the quality and integrity of the appraisal process, feedback is continuous and developmental rather than evaluative in the early stages. A coaching or mentoring session accompanies feedback. The development of a goal or action plan also follows feedback. The process is necessarily confidential. (Dyer, 2001, ASCD).

One way to help teachers improve their capacity is through cognitive coaching. In a **cognitive coaching model**, foundational beliefs include

1. All people possess vast resources that are untapped.
2. Teachers' performances are based to a great extent, and come out of, internal skills.
3. All have the ability to improve and achieve excellence if effort will be put forth.
4. Skillful colleagues can enhance the process of improvement for teachers, but teachers must participate through reflection, being motivated and highly engaged. In addition, good cognitive coaching promotes productive states of mind including 1) efficacy, 2) flexibility, 3) craftsmanship, 4) consciousness and 5) interdependence (Costa and Garmston (1994). A school principal should be sure that the cognitive coaching process attends to each of these.

A four-stage process of teacher learning (following Peterson & Clarke, 1986) is identified as

1. planning
2. interacting
3. reflecting
4. application and projection to future state

Each of these stages is an area for intervention, discussion and improving skills and knowledge. Coaching competencies in the school leader include a proven skill base, skillful questioning, active listening, probing for specificity and elaboration, collecting data and using it thoughtfully.

A coaching session includes a pre-conference, observation and post-conference. The process of coaching includes sustained focus on the effectiveness of the teaching process. Learning, transformation of the mind, expansion of frames of reference, intellectual capacity and repertoire are included in this focus on effective teaching process.

- 1) The pre-conference includes discussion of learning goals, anticipated student interactions and how a teacher will know the students have achieved these goals, and effective instructional strategies that will be used.
- 2) The observation will have intensely documented data on teacher knowledge, student performance, student engagement and interaction, techniques and methods, etc.
- 3) Post-conferences may be extended over time and overlap (spiral with) other conferences. The post-conference includes much questioning and probing, recall of specific information, reconstruction of events, and analysis of data for student achievement. Discussions may center on promoting improved teacher and student thinking, use of standards, overview of annual maps and curricular goals, use of assessments support in new instructional methods, reflecting on and reporting on, student learning.

Quote for Reflection

“You cannot strengthen the weak by weakening the strong. You cannot build character by taking away man’s initiative. You cannot help people permanently by doing for them what they could and should do for themselves.”

Abraham Lincoln

Culture Building

“We are often at cross purposes because we don’t share a common language.”

Schools are complex organizations that express the intentions, values and beliefs of their members. The cultural perspective on developing a good school holds “a vital role for the leader in defining, shaping and promoting the core culture of the organization” (Stewart, Prebble and Duncan, 1997, p. 41). The leader’s role may be even more important than has been previously thought in long-term school effectiveness.

In developing a good culture, it is important for a school leader to

1. Be present. A school leader must be visible and available. Lorraine Monroe, a noted administrator from Harlem, New York states, “If you don’t go, you don’t know.”
2. Know your primary purpose along with the vision and keep each in mind every single day.
3. Work to know your community. Depending on the size of the school, work to know your student’s names, to learn something positive about your students, and as much as is possible, know their parents. Also, know your teachers well as professionals.
4. Honor teachers and provide academic, social, emotional support, adequate resources, ongoing training, and guidance.
5. Don’t fear letting someone go when it is truly necessary.
6. Develop a collegial team within clearly understood standards for behavior, action and thinking.
7. Communicate with everyone with the vision and mission in mind and with keys of excellent character in your hand every day.
8. Be real, show integrity, be fair, and be trustworthy.
9. Listen well.
10. Stay enthusiastic and keep a positive attitude.
11. Be prompt. Be where you say you will be, when you say you will be.
12. Keep improving. Eliminate what does not give value so as to provide service and time to those working to develop value in the school.
13. Be visionary, yet be very grounded in the operations, finances, skills programs, knowledge delivery, instructional methods and so forth necessary to being a true educational leader.

CULTURE AUDIT

Developed by Kathryn A. T. Knox, Ph.D.

“Stay very open to gathering environmental and cultural information”

A culture audit is yet another tool to be used in an on-going evaluation of the many components related to atmosphere in a school building, school classroom, or campus of a school.. Below are some questions for evaluation. A culture audit is similar to an environmental audit, but the observations associated therewith are not as easy. A culture audit involves (among other things) deep reflection, honest ongoing discussions among all participants and contributors, celebration, management of change, applied principles of adult learning, listening, fairness, balance, flexibility, and integrity. A culture audit may be used in conjunction with the Tangram Balance discussions.

1. Internalizing the mission statement, vision, purpose, and objectives
 - a. Sample a random group of teachers, parents and students. How many can state the mission statement correctly or at least explain what the primary purposes of the school are? If the number is not very high, what is being believed about the school’s mission that might need addressing to improve clarity in the community?
 - b. Can people explain the school’s vision as distinct from its mission?
 - c. How many teachers, students and parents can give some examples of what the mission statement and the vision statement means in action in the classroom?
 - d. In the school community, is there hope, pride, vision and optimism evident in the discussion of mission, vision, objectives and purposes?
 - e. Can teachers, students, and parents define, with evident commitment to them, the top academic objectives and how they are related to the mission?
 - f. Can teachers, students and parents explain why the academic objectives are important? Can they reference some stories of success or related research, evidencing a collective buy-in?
 - g. Can “best practice” be explained, identified and rationally defended?
 - h. Is a variety of collected data shared and understood?
 - i. In your observations of classrooms, is data clearly used in improving practice?
 - j. Can a majority of teachers and parents explain what good teaching looks like in the classroom?
 - k. Is there an entrepreneurial spirit evident in which teachers, staff and all involved in the school, are interested in finding and using the best practice, best methods, best materials, and sharing the knowledge with excitement?

2. Extent of common language and comfort

- a. Can teachers, students and parents share “tribal stories” of the evolution of the school, including successes as well as challenges overcome, that the school experienced?
- b. Are all students included and able to participate in important things?
- c. Is there clear evidence of emotional, social and physical safety everywhere?
- d. What does it “feel” like to spend a day following a student through the school day?
- e. Is there clearly-established rapport between students, between students and teachers, between parents and teachers, and between teachers and teachers?
- f. Can shared metaphors be easily defined for others outside the school?
- g. Are there school traditions, celebrations and meaningful symbols that increase engagement for all in the school? Are there classroom traditions and celebrations that align with the mission and objectives?
- h. Do all in the school speak respectfully and treat each other respectfully?
- i. Are all players in the school included in the real culture, not just in the operations (all teachers, all students, office staff, visiting support staff, parents, custodial staff, etc.?)
- j. Is there a smooth and effective way of integrating newcomers, new teachers, new students, into the culture and the language of the school?
- k. Is there real and regular evidence of care and comfort in the school?
- l. Do teachers take extra time to help students achieve to higher levels?
- m. Do teachers take extra time to participate in or to create fun activities for students, celebrations or student performance activities?
- n. Is there regular evidence of maintenance of human dignity?
- o. Are there ways for teachers to work out problems such as exchanging duty, having some freedom of time with accountability for results, informal mentoring?
- p. Is there a common approach to character and moral expectation? Are challenges to the moral expectation dealt with coherently, fairly, and in alignment with other statements and actions promoted by the school?
- q. Is there opportunity for individual and collective reflection?
- r. Are errors and time-eaters and other non-value activities directly addressed and changed?
- s. Is there physical, emotional and mental support evident?
- t. How is discipline handled? Does it maintain dignity while holding to high standards?
- u. Is there ongoing ethics training supporting the ability to speak out effectively for the good of the school, and the clear practice of espoused beliefs and values of the school?

- v. Are there clear expectations for performance within ethical boundaries; ensuring goals are not pushing people into unethical behavior or behavior that conflicts with their beliefs and values?
3. Examining potential conflict (consider students, board members, parents, committees, teachers individually and collectively)
- a. Can the underlying philosophy of the school be explained by all in the school? Is there general buy-in to this philosophy? For areas of the philosophy that are conflicted with certain individuals or groups, what type of communication and resolution strategies are put into place?
 - b. Are “we vs. I” concerns addressed or ignored?
 - c. Are all opinions and ideas valued and given relatively equal time and meritorious consideration?
 - d. Are there opportunities and support for shared leadership? Where and how? Is there any imbalance in the leadership group in relation to the school make-up?
 - e. Are there any obvious mismatches between the style of the administrator(s) and that of individual teachers, or between teachers and individual students? Is style mismatch affecting appraisal or communication?
 - f. Is there a sense of overload operating in the school?
 - g. Are there power groups that cause imbalance?
 - h. Is there any unfairness or perceived unfairness in the system? What plans are in place to improve this situation?
 - i. Are there sources of personal or systemic error that are unresolved or ignored? What is going on to remediate this situation?
 - j. Is there a “shadow organization” (quietly undermining school goals or teachers’ work) operating in the school that is unaddressed or unresolved?
 - k. Are style mismatches or personality clashes interfering with effectiveness? What is being done to improve the situation?
 - l. Are people in a “box” of personal perception or a box of a personal comfort zone, which impedes best practice?
 - m. Are there places where there is a pushing into a conflict between belief and values?
 - n. Is there clear and fair ongoing appraisal?
 - o. Is there a lack of expertise and perceived cover-up going on anywhere?
 - p. Are others treated as one would like to be treated?
 - q. Is there any perceived or actual preference for individuals or teams shown by the leader?
 - r. Is there sensitivity to family or personal needs?
 - s. Is freedom or contribution limited in any way?
 - t. Is there evidence of coercion or psychological authority in demands and expectations?

- u. Is there “dumping” of work on an individual or group?
 - v. Is the process of change understood and given time?
 - w. Is there real work on creating a less stress-filled workplace for all in the school?
 - x. Is there a focus on the important items over the urgent ones?
4. Communication and Leadership
- a. Is there opportunity for creating a balance in life and for personal energy management?
 - b. Is there regular opportunity for networking, observing, practicing together, examining quality of work and results?
 - c. Are all people able to express their unique contributions, beliefs, and ideas?
 - d. Is there a clear and coherent leadership model or paradigm that best serves the school’s situation? Can this be defended as the best model?
 - e. Is the leadership authority derived from a foundational moral authority or from rules or simple hierarchy?
 - f. Is wisdom discussed and valued?
 - g. Does communication reveal teachers as assets or costs?
 - h. Is style addressed in communication, evaluation, judgment, teambuilding?
 - i. Is dignity promoted?
 - j. Is rapport actively developed?
 - k. Do all in the school receive the important information?
 - l. Is effective support given when needed?
 - m. Is there a variety of communication used in the school?
 - n. Is undermining addressed and resolved or allowed to go on and on?
 - o. Are people given appreciation in different ways?
5. Professional Development, Appraisal and the Entrepreneurial Spirit
- a. Is there a defined and documented plan for professional development in the entire system based on the vision, mission and objectives?
 - b. Is the evaluation system understood and agreed upon by all members?
 - c. Are there many and varied types of data gathering on the expertise of teachers, that is shared with them? Are feedback and discussion part of the data gathering, performance development and appraisal system?
 - d. Is the leader somewhat of an expert in the critical content and skill areas? If not, is he/she willing to participate in training, learn about applications, and participate in professional development focused team-building prior to evaluation activities?
 - e. Does the leader participate in required professional development activities for staff?

- f. Is there opportunity for sharing information and for collective monitoring of the effectiveness of new ideas?
- g. Is there shared leadership in developing curriculum, effective assessment, components of improving classroom, hallway, or school management?
- h. Is there a continual learning paradigm, including scholarly study, in place for all involved in the work of knowledge and learning?
- i. Is competency continually developed from within the school?
- j. What is the turnover rate? How long do people remain at the school on average? What reasons exist for this?
- k. Do potential teachers see the school as significant career development or as an acceptable job?
- l. Are goals and progress benchmarks set and achieved?
- m. Are there opportunities for teachers and students to develop, create and/or implement better ways of doing things?
- n. Is pride attended to?
- o. Are personal motivators understood?
- p. Is success reinforced and passed on to others?

There are many questions for consideration. These are designed as starting places for those leaders who desire to develop a deep and rich professional culture, to uncover perceptions, and to guide reflection for better planning and decision-making.

Dealing with Difficult Conversations

After examining the culture audit, discussing the organizational structure, identifying areas needing attention, evaluating the supervisory data, creating an environmental audit and action plan, other areas will undoubtedly come to the forefront needing attention. Most of the areas requiring attention will involve people. It is critical that leaders hold strong tools for dealing with difficult conversations. The leader must be seen as competent, trustworthy, fair, and moving with the team on the journey toward the vision (as has been discussed in prior chapters). Ignoring problem areas, putting off difficult conversations, accommodating unproductive behavior will not contribute to the leader's effectiveness.

There are many useful texts to improve personal communication, to understand diverse perceptions and to practice ways of addressing challenging situations. It is recommended that a school leader give time to this area through reading, careful reflection, and practice. One useful text for a school leader to read is *Living on a Tightrope: A Survival Guide for Principals* by Sommers and Payne (2001). Another is *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most* by Stone, Patton, and Heen (1999) of the Harvard Negotiation Project. In approaching difficult conversations, which must be had and not avoided, it is helpful to have knowledge about personal style (reference Chapter 3 in this manual) and to be aware of the state of mind and heart and perception that can aid or interfere with clear two-way communication. For example, the authors of *Difficult Conversations* claim that difficulty in conversation arises not from actions but from thinking. They suggest the importance of decoding the structure of difficult conversations, noting that each difficult conversation is really three conversations:

- 1) the "what happened?" conversation which involves perceptions of truth and blame,
- 2) the feelings conversation, and
- 3) the identity conversation.

The book encourages clearer communication through making observations and reasoning explicit and clarifying what needs to be done differently. This also involves knowing the real purpose of the conversation and of the organization/relationship, knowing oneself, being sure of objectives, speaking to the heart of the matter, reframing information, and not relying on "subtext." In addition the need to look to standards, invent options and talk about how to keep communication open as you go forward are also critical.

As the authors state, "Delivering a difficult message is like throwing a hand grenade. Coated with sugar, thrown hard or soft, a hand grenade is still going to do damage." (P. xvii) A leader must not be so afraid of doing damage to ego or identity that difficult conversations are avoided. A leader must learn the

tools of handling difficult conversations so that progress may continue, both individually and collectively.

Four Steps in Conflict Resolution

1. TALK. Talk to the person you have a problem with first and before you discuss any negative impressions, facts or feelings with anyone else. NOTE: It is most helpful that talk occurs within a supportive, goal-oriented and moral climate. The climate and culture must be strongly developed for people to remain through the conflict resolution process.
2. DIPLOMATIC CONFRONTATION. When confronting conflict, attack the problem, not the person. Be careful of the choice of words and the impact of chosen language on the person and the situation. **In confrontation, it is important to separate people from the perceived problems, and to focus on interests not positions.**
3. MEDIATION. If a solution cannot be found through talking or through diplomatic confrontation, an optional third step would include a third person who claims the ability to be objective. This third person holds, by agreement with all parties, authority to help participants determine and commit to a solution based on facts and data.
4. ARBITRATION. A final step in conflict resolution would move to a binding solution imposed by authority. Conflict management may use a backward-mapping system in which sources of conflict are clearly identified and tributaries feeding into the current conflict are also identified. Group thinking about fundamental questions may be part of the “talk” step of conflict resolution. A matrix or scripted notes of dialogue may also be included during the initial stages of the conflictual situation for the purpose of uncovering fundamental elements including emotions or interpretations of events, so that progress may be made as a community.

Difficult conversations are going to occur. A school leader will plan in advance how to deal with individual and group parent conflict, student conflict or teacher conflict, and large group conflict that may involve the community. One way to actively plan is for the principal to visualize different meetings on potentially controversial topics in advance. What will be the general framework for discussion? One suggested way is for the principal and/or vice principal to meet individually with those on each side of the argument first to gain information and allow the seeking of any necessary information in advance of a group meeting. At the group meeting, ground-rules should be set for how communication happens, to ensure that the focus area is on the situation and not on the personality, and to set a time for focused discussion. The principal can then ask representatives of each side to state their concerns and the

desired outcome, during which time, the other side does not interrupt and the principal takes summary notes; concerns may be rephrased and summarize areas of coincidence clarified. For example, the angry reaction of one set of parents may be that “that math teacher you have here is really poor and should not be teaching kids!” Their overriding concern may be that their child is not *learning* mathematics well; this may also be the main concern of the teacher. From this point of coincidence, each side can be asked what actions each will take to move toward the preferred outcome of student achievement. The parents may agree to oversee homework completion, while the teacher may agree to add more kinesthetic methods to her lesson delivery. These action steps will then be written down with a benchmark for evaluating student improvement, and a time for a second informal meeting if necessary. Such a listening and problem-solving approach can avoid blow-ups or gradual escalation of temper.

It is important to understand how pre-commitment and initial positions in confrontation, bias our perception and judgment. *“Our assumptions of what is true are based on our perceptions. Our initial positions about what is possible come out of our assumptions. One should seek diligently for disconfirming information as well as confirming information in order to fairly examine the validity of preconceptions and assumptions, and to move beyond the belief in a “fixed pie” in which issues are perceived as win-lose, with one person gaining something at the expense of the other”* (Stone, Patton and Heen, 1999).

Communication in Communities

“Free and informed choice is not the same as the right to choose or not to choose without the benefit of valid information. Instead, it results from examining a problem by understanding its cognitive and affective dimensions and then freely choosing a course of action or non-action.” (Sergiovanni, 2000)

“Conflict can be likened to turbulence. It happens when one is moving forward or changing directions. As in flying, the need is to go over it, under it, around it or through it, but not to go back and land.”

One step in more effective communication is to examine style preferences (see Chapter 3). Style instruments may be given to each faculty member and matrices may be created for identification and further discussion of team strengths. Regular communication results from a school leader’s being visible and available in the school, as well as from more formal opportunities. In addition, there are many ways to communicate expectations and high standards. The following Six Rules and Four Steps have been observed in many schools in these or other forms:

Six Rules of Effective Communication in School Communities (received on a poster from a teacher; no specific reference noted)

1. Treat others as you would want to be treated. This includes refraining from personal or moral attacks or depicting to others the opposite side of the argument as negative.
2. Those who claim the right to speak should use the language of respect, common interests and responsibilities.
3. Those who claim the right to dissent should assume the responsibility to debate.
4. Those who claim the right to criticize should assume the responsibility to comprehend.
5. Those who claim the right to influence should accept the responsibility not to inflame.
6. Those who claim the right to participate should accept the responsibility to persuade.

As the school leader examines the communication structure of the school, personal communication preferences, and communication preferences of others, it is helpful to ask these four questions:

1. To what extent are my communications of important information with staff congruent with the varied ways the information will be processed (including the vision, the necessary tools and resources, the required

expertise, the training, the concerns, the emotions, the expected results connected to purpose)?

2. Am I forgetting one of the components? For example, am I neglecting to examine and communicate all that is necessary about knowledge-acquisition planning when I am planning for performance?
3. Is the emotional or metacognitive component taken into account in my communication with varied staff members?

Sternberg's Triarchic Theory

Sternberg (1985) developed a model based on how humans process information.

This model can be adapted to the leadership model of communication and training. There are three major components of the processing of information:

1. Metacognitive components
2. Performance components
3. Knowledge Acquisition components

These three components are interrelated. In addition, there are also experiential and contextual factors of the processing of information. When a leader can consider giving attention to all the areas of information processing during important communications, and develop a professional development system within the context of this knowledge, awareness, understanding and attention may be improved in the school.

There are many forces acting upon the effectiveness of the school leader. There are external and internal forces. Leadership must examine these forces and be able to manage them, prioritize them and diminish those that interfere with the mission. Leadership must also honestly analyze whether the core values of the school and the core values of the leader are truly aligned, and where there needs to be a "programming update." In approaching a personal "programming update," the following questions and reflection topics should be addressed by the school leader:

1. Identify the two strongest and most important internal and external forces acting upon you at this time.
2. What are the two most time-consuming internal and external forces? Are these the same as those listed in number one?
3. With a trusted colleague or consultant, discuss the forces in relation to core values of the school.
4. Consider your life's purpose in relation to your career at this time. How might you increase the inspiration and passionate vision to help your career become more aligned with your purpose?

5. What if you were to quit doing one thing and then use that time to do one other thing a bit better? What one thing could you stop and what one thing could you improve?
6. What training is needed to help you improve your performance (for example, technological understanding, and communication effectiveness)?
7. Do you take “refresh your spirit” breaks during your week? If not, why not?
8. Picture your ideal work week and define it specifically.
9. With the picture of an ideal work week in mind, re-examine the vision and student objectives. Are they aligned purposefully? How might you work to get to this point of an ideal week that supports the vision and objectives of the school?
10. What causes you the most fatigue? What three steps can you take to alleviate this fatigue?

Self-reflection is crucial to the leader. Time must be spent in analyzing effectiveness so that movement can be made toward the vision. Self-analysis and reflection are part of all learning. Writing down the responses to the following questions and then referring to them each month, comparing actions to beliefs, is a useful way to promote self-growth, ensure fair observation, and model learning. As the leader continues self-reflection on areas of personal growth and organizational effectiveness, the following items may also be considered:

1. As a leader, my feelings about power, authority and control can be summarized in these three sentences
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
2. I am a leader in this school because
3. My impression of my level of emotional intelligence is (include two examples of EI in action)
4. My impression of my own personality style could be summarized in these sentences:

5. When my personality style influences or interferes with fair observation and judgment, I am aware of it/unaware of it and do the following:
6. I constantly monitor (or neglect to monitor) our vision, mission and objectives with specific strategies in mind, specific professional development, and consideration of effective motivation. Comments:
7. I know that I constantly monitor the culture of the school and communicate under the Six Rules of Effective Communication when I notice that we are falling down in some area because of the following examples
8. I know that I am effective (ineffective) in issues of diversity and divergent viewpoints because (list some data)
9. My top three strengths are
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
10. My three weaknesses or challenge areas are
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
11. The biggest interference(s) with my ability to show strong leadership are
12. What I plan to do to increase my effectiveness

Managing the Change Process

A good leader is able to manage change. The impact of poorly-handled change is felt throughout the system and often for an extended time. All the components for making changes must thoughtfully be put in place. When one component is missing, the threat to the individual or the system is real. Individuals required to implement systemic change, are often being asked to implement personal change at the same time, which can feel threatening. Personal change and systemic change may be deep or superficial, depending on the preparation and communication process of the change. Different types of concern may also be evidenced by those affected in the change, including *personal concerns, training concerns, level of risk concerns.*

Homeostasis is a self-protecting regulatory system that exists in living things. It is a natural condition of equilibrium which resists change. It encourages living beings to act in familiar ways even when familiar reactions are inappropriate. In any school, there is a comfort zone that is composed of routines, beliefs, habits, physical locations and so forth. If there is perception that any part of the comfort zone is threatened, there is immediate retrenchment. The nature of homeostasis must be understood and addressed in order that the change process may proceed. To manage change effectively, purpose must be clearly defined. A leader should define the purpose of the change and how it enhances the grand vision. If this definition cannot be made, the change should be reexamined.

To manage change, VISION, SKILLS, INCENTIVES, RESOURCES, an ACTION PLAN, and RESULTS must all be part of the big picture.

- ✓ If VISION is lacking, confusion will result.
- ✓ If SKILLS are lacking, anxiety will result.
- ✓ If INCENTIVES are lacking, resistance may result.
- ✓ If RESOURCES are lacking, frustration will result.
- ✓ If an ACTION PLAN is lacking, a treadmill will result
- ✓ If RESULTS are lacking, inertia will set in.

In short, an analysis tool, such as the following document to analyze the process of change, may be used to ensure that with any complex change, all the components for success are evaluated:

THE CHANGE:

THE PURPOSE OF THE CHANGE: (stated in one sentence)

The people directly involved: _____

What I anticipate regarding personal concerns that need addressing either individually or with teams:

VISION will be communicated by	Professional EXPERTISE and needed SKILLS will be increased by	The INCENTIVES for this change will be	The RESOURCES available for this change are	The ACTION PLAN is attached with a timeline	The RESULTS expected are

There are five typical negative responses to change that may occur in the

- Individual
- The group
- The whole community

in different ways, and all may be operating at the same time.

These responses are

- i. deny that the change will or is happening
- ii. resist the change (passive or active)
- iii. blame others for the change
- iv. adapt a bit, but not fundamentally
- v. give up

To avoid the negative responses, it is suggested that a leader or leadership group, seeing that change is necessary to the school, start small but *fundamentally*. The leader who has not developed a strong culture of trust and motivation toward excellence is at a disadvantage in the change process, but that should not keep him or her from taking on the leadership task of fundamental change. On the other hand, the school leader who has developed a culture of strength, trust and entrepreneurial spirit may have the wonderful option of developed followers who understand the vision and are willing to take on a big and fundamental change.

SMART goals should be always in mind during any fundamental change. SMART goals mean Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Research-Based and Timely. SMART goals should be communicated well and purposefully with all involved in any change.

In regard to specific curricular change, proven tools should be developed and shared with those responsible for maintaining the change. In short, discussing “need to improve literacy” will not do much toward advancing specific benchmarks for the teacher to reach for. Rather, the creation of a school-wide literacy framework within which the following specific focus areas are detailed and complete so that all teachers know their specific responsibilities and the big picture of the change including specific details and tools such as

1. the specific literacy curriculum for each grade, broken down into specific sections, with direct connections to standards,
2. developed writing pre and post tests and writing benchmarks for each grade,
3. developed reading pre and post tests and reading benchmarks for each grade,
4. developed rubrics for evaluation of student progress both formatively and summatively,
5. standardized testing results, and how that information can be integrated into the literacy program directly,
6. use of an assessment framework for tracking data and
7. completion of individual student literacy profiles to document present state of achievement and to follow student achievement over time.

A detailed plan such as this may be used to help the entire faculty understand how the literacy program builds upon itself, how students are succeeding or not in certain areas, how each teacher's responsibility is crucial to the whole, and so on. The same type of program can be done with a mathematics framework or other content and skills programs. The whole project with all rubrics and so forth should then be copied for each teacher, highlights of the process put on a faculty lounge wall as a reminder, and expectations for literacy improvement used in the appraisal process. In short, the management of any change process must be one of "big picture" as well as details. *Change might be thought of as a process of "strategic architecture" rather than as a relatively superficial or linear activity.* When the change process is handled well, and the school leader understands and addresses the complexity of change, the foundation for further improvement in the school is strengthened.

Asset-Building Schools

Schools that build assets for students include the following qualities, among others:

1. They have a rigorous curriculum of study, and scholarship
2. They evidence a caring school climate
3. They have strong, shared values
4. They provide service to others
5. They are safe places to be
6. Achievement motivation is fostered
7. There is opportunity for creativity
8. Positive peer influence is evident
9. Integrity, responsibility and restraint are among the character qualities promoted

In a coherent school culture, school leaders might examine the extent to which each of these qualities are promoted at the teacher level, and what specific plans have been created for developing assets in the school for all in the school.

Six Principles of Adult Learning

In examining the assets listed above, scholarship and continuous learning are critical to the success of the enterprise. Because of the critical nature of the development of teacher knowledge and skill in schools, the leader of a school should be aware of how other adults like to learn.

1. Adults want to participate in activities and discussions rather than only being talked at or to. They want to have objectives in training that are relevant to them personally and professionally, and directly important to them in their jobs.
2. Adults experience anxiety in any new learning, especially in learning that requires that they “put themselves on the line” in front of others.
3. Adults work best in a climate that includes trust, respect, care, and light humor. Adults do not generally and consistently work to their highest ability when they sit and listen to what they have done wrong and must do to correct the situation.
4. Adults come to new learning with significant and well-developed schema, experienced and background information. This must be honored and recognized.
5. Adults want to feel involved in designing the goals of their learning and they want to interact and question.
6. Adults resist training that suggests they are ineffective or incompetent in their teaching. Adults learn best when helpful, positive, supportive and practical ideas are shared. Criticism is usually insufficient to improve practice.

It is important for the leader to ensure clear organizational relationships and reporting structures for any follow-up from training sessions in order to eliminate waste and frustration. Such an approach builds assets for the school. In analyzing knowledge about the school organization, it is often helpful for the leader to create a chart illustrating the relationships, authority and communication structure of the following groups:

1. Board of Directors
2. Principal, Assistant Principal(s)
3. Dean
4. Elementary teachers
5. Secondary teachers
6. counselors
7. coaches

8. support services for education including special education
9. business manager and office staff
10. facility maintenance
11. other (nurse, food services, etc.)

From this chart, one can locate any potential areas of confusion, double communication, gaps in communication, or overlapping responsibilities. Another consideration would be to involve the faculty in regular consulting sessions. Accountability expectations and procedures can be “put on the table” for discussion, clarification, and analysis and assessment of ongoing needs for improvement. The calendar should be cooperatively examined to determine periods during the year which have an especially high level of responsibility and planning. The Tangram Balance can be used (see Chapter 2) to begin deep discussions about the school organization, as can the Culture Audit and the Change Matrix. Using Post-it notes, activities can be listed on butcher paper on the walls of the lounge, noting units taught in every grade, every year. Post-it notes can also be used to list activities in the school with approximate times of occurrence to examine time management or potential conflict in the movement of students through the school. Teacher professional development can be examined as a staff, increasing knowledge of resources and networking opportunities. These are just a few fundamental and important consulting opportunities available to leaders to promote teacher involvement and the continual building of assets. Other information that is trivial or that may be put into an email should not clutter faculty meetings and consulting group time. That time should be saved for the important topics.

Identified Characteristics of Admired and Effective Leaders

In extensive long-term research which surveyed over 20,000 people on four continents, and in which the researchers examined case studies, and conducted more than forty in-depth interviews with respected leaders, the following characteristics arose for admired and effective leaders (Kouzes and Posner, 1995). The term “leader” is granted by followers when those leaders exhibit the following characteristics. Compare each characteristic with your own leadership style. Be very specific in providing yourself examples of each one in action. Be honest about where you need to improve.

TOP TEN CHARACTERISTICS

1. Honest
2. Forward-looking
3. Inspiring
4. Competent
5. Fair-minded
6. Supportive
7. Broad-minded
8. Intelligent
9. Straightforward
10. Dependable

In addition, James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner (1995), identified Ten Commitments of good leadership. The Practices and Commitments are listed below. (These are explained in further detail in their book The Leadership Challenge.)

The practice of “Challenging the Process” includes the commitment to 1) *search* out challenging opportunities to change and grow, innovate and improve, and to 2) *experiment*, take risks, and learn from the accompanying mistakes.

The practice of “Inspiring a Shared Vision” requires the commitment to 3) *envision* an uplifting and ennobling future, 4) *enlist* others in a common vision by appealing to their values, interests, hopes and dreams.

The practice of “Enabling Others to Act,” includes the commitment to 5) *foster collaboration* by promoting cooperative goals and building trust, and 6) *strengthen people* by giving power away, providing choice, developing competence, assigning critical tasks, and offering viable support.

The practice of “Modeling the Way,” includes the commitment to 7) *set the example* by behaving in ways that are consistent with shared values, 8) *achieve small wins* that promote consistent progress and build commitment.

The practice of “Encouraging the Heart,” requires the commitment to 9) *recognize* individual contributions to the success of every project, and 10) *celebrate* team accomplishments regularly.

In examining the practices and commitments listed above, note three specific ways in the last quarter, that you have done each of these:

1. search out challenge
2. experiment
3. envision
4. enlist others
5. foster collaboration
6. strengthen people by giving power away, increasing competencies
7. set the example with values
8. achieve small wins
9. recognize individual contributions
10. celebrate team accomplishments

It is important to connect these leadership qualities directly with the standards for professional development in the work of principals. These qualities are not distinct from, but rather embedded into, the work of excellent principals. Each of the Standards for the Approved Program of Professional Education and Professional Development of School Principals in Colorado includes knowledge and performances. It is suggested that the readers become familiar with the knowledge and performances listed for each standard. The standards, for reference, are as follows, and expand the definition of the characteristics of good leaders:

- 01.01 The principal models and sets high standards to ensure quality learning experiences that lead to success for all students.
- 02.02 The principal leads and supports a school community that is committed to and focused on learning.

- 03.03 The principal behaves ethically and creates an environment that encourages and develops responsibility, ethics, and citizenship in self and others.
- 04.04 The principal recognizes, appreciates, and supports ethnic, cultural, gender, economic and human diversity throughout the school community, while striving to provide fair and equitable treatment and consideration for all.
- 05.05 The principal is a continuous learner who encourages and supports the personal and professional development of self and others.
- 06.06 The principal organizes and manages human and financial resources to create a safe and effective working environment.

It is common, in an event-driven enterprise, to focus remaining time on our areas of strength and comfort. However, as the principal works to rise to the standards and benchmarks for knowledge and performance, he or she will find that the leadership competency expands and that each part of core leadership is being strengthened.

Summary of Sergiovanni’s (2000) Leadership Paradigm, and Excerpts from Brown & Moffet’s The Heroic Journey (1999):

As a leader, where are you? There is a place for each level of leadership. For example, bureaucratic leadership may be especially helpful in a fire drill! However, on a daily basis, other types of leadership may be more effective. Examining one’s mental paradigm of leadership and having related discussions can be very helpful to a school desiring to move to a level of excellence. The following categories are from the book Moral Leadership by T. J. Sergiovanni; however, the summarized definitions are simplifications of the categories. The reader is encouraged to read the entire book in order to get the full understanding presented therein.

Bureaucratic Authority comes from the idea that the leader is authorized by an organizational hiring process to be the leader. Followers act primarily because of the leader’s leadership, the leader’s identification of problem areas, and also because of the clarity of the rules. “Hierarchy equals expertise.”

Psychological Authority comes from the idea that followers act because of the desire to please the leader, because of the leader’s personable attributes. The leader meets the psychological needs of teachers through a positive interpersonal climate.

Technical –Rational Authority in leadership encourages followers to “act according to the research.” Evidence for decisions comes from logic and scientific knowledge is seen as “superordinate to practice.”

Professional Authority is evident from field expertise, though professional knowledge comes from teacher practice and may differ from research-based knowledge. In this position of authority, research-based knowledge is helpful for informing but not for prescribing action.

Moral Authority derives from “felt obligation.” Schools with moral leaders are professional learning communities defined by the shared values and commitments.

Leaders are encouraged to examine the style they prefer and espouse, seeking evidence for, not just belief about their leadership approach. Continuing the discussion of systemic development and moral leadership, in the book The Hero’s Journey by Brown & Moffett the discussion of the elements of a “heroic system” are included. Three of the many elements mentioned in the book include:

1. Systems Thinking including a) identifying gaps between the real and the ideal, b) using double-loop learning to think outside the box, and c) building capacity for innovation.

*The principal may determine, with others, to what extent (and discovering specific examples for support), the three components identified by Brown & Moffett in systems thinking, are well-addressed in the school. Questions might be asked cooperatively: “Where is there need for improvement? What can be done better?”

2. Standards-based Curriculum including identifying assessment standards and backward mapping to determine instructional interventions.

*Content and skills maps for the year and month, units stating assessments, and whole-community communication on objectives and interventions can be useful tools for addressing this element. The school leader with the teacher leaders may determine to what extent the school employs content maps, skills maps, a rigorous and well-articulated curriculum, shared assessments and general communication. Responses from this research can lead to ensuring that lessons and assessments focus on essential ideas, enduring understandings, applications of skill and knowledge and lifelong habits of mind.

3. Research-Based Instructional Strategies

*The school leader examines to what extent all staff are fully informed and skilled in identifying and using best practices.

“...people are pleased to have a leader who will not bend with every new wind or every new crisis. They need someone to count on—someone they know will stick to the central core of what is most important. And when that core is attacked, you stand strong. You stay the course, because you know that you are on the right course.”
(Monroe, 1998, cited in *The Hero’s Journey*, p. 130)

**“Leaders have a knowledge of their duty
and a sense of honor in action.”**
(Thucydides)

Mental Management

When teachers or school leaders lack balance, a feeling of trust, flexibility, or motivation, the impact is felt widely in the school. When teachers or leaders lack skill and expertise, students are the losers. To maintain balance and expertise, mental management must be specifically and regularly attended to in a school of excellence.

Mental Models are important parts of a Learning Organization. Sternberg (1988) discusses Mental Self Management and the failure thereof. He notes several reasons why mental self-management fails. Four of them are noted below. Reflection questions have been added upon which leaders may act.

1. Lack of motivation

LEADER QUESTIONS: How can you ensure that you have a clear handle on personal motivators for yourself and others? What are three ways you are working to use and increase organizational motivators? Do your ideas promote an internal or external locus of control?

2. Using the wrong abilities

LEADER QUESTIONS: How is this lack identified for all in the system? How can training, mentorship, and other support systems be implemented to ensure adequate improvement? Is the professional development system clearly linked to the informal and formal evaluation systems?

3. Failure to initiate

LEADER QUESTION: What elements in your culture promote or inhibit an entrepreneurial spirit for individuals and teams?

4. Lack of balance between crucial, analytic thinking and creative, synthetic thinking

LEADER QUESTIONS: How can such balance be better promoted in the school and in the person? Do mentors, partners or teams have the ability to share best practices, to model ideas, and to practice new ideas in a safe environment?

Other Reflection Questions for the Leaders of the School

Some questions are adapted from *The Hero's Journey: How Educators Can Transform Schools and Improve Learning*, Brown & Moffett, 1999

(Suggestion: A leader may not only reflect personally on these questions, but may ask for other's opinions)

1. How do I deal with innovation? Is my approach effective?
2. Do I have the vision clearly before me in making decisions, changes or criticisms?
3. At what times do I evidence resistance? Is the resistance related to a specific situation which may be warranted to protect the culture and the environment, or does it occur often and with most change?
4. Do I deal effectively with different personality styles and different communication styles?
5. What knowledge or skill am I lacking that would help to improve my performance?
6. Do we have too many initiatives going on at once? Is this interfering with the mission and vision or with balance in the school?
7. How do I identify and deal with the “shadow organizations” that may be operating behind the scenes?
8. Are there any evidences of “symbols over substance” in our school?
9. How might time be a barrier to performance for all or some in our school? What ideas could be implemented to eliminate this barrier?
10. Are we all very clear as a faculty about the purpose and processes necessary to sustain significant and important change?
11. Is there any problem area about which I am somewhat unaware or unwilling to address?
12. Have I advocated and supported “tinkering” or quick fixes over consistency, perseverance and taking on the harder issues?
13. What was the last book I read that made me really wrestle with ideas? Did I work to implement any new ideas after my reading?

NOTES:

Developing Organizational Character

(Special references:

Moral Leadership and Leadership for the Schoolhouse by T. J. Sergiovanni;
The Fifth Discipline, Schools that Learn, and The Dance of Change, by Senge et al.)

Though much attention has already been devoted in this text to developing culture, understanding of communication styles, progressing toward the mission, building assets, integrating appraisal with professional development and uncovering thinking, this chapter extends the discussion a bit farther, giving reference to the specific texts above.

A leader needs to give specific attention to two interdependent components of the school culture in order to create a strong foundation for positive character development. These two components are

The SYSTEMS-WORLD
and
The LIFE-WORLD
of the school.

The SYSTEMS-WORLD includes management systems, running smoothly and effectively, means and ends, technical support and operational systems, financial capital, outcomes, productivity.

The LIFE-WORLD of the school includes the elements of the culture, the dreams, the values, the needs, purposes, and desires, the significance and deep satisfaction the members find in the school. Within the life-world is the foundation for the development of intellectual and social capital, growth and development.

“The school leader must be vigilant in protecting the life-world from being colonized by the systems-world.” (Sergiovanni, 2000)

“The systems-world is not secondary to the life-world; both are important in the running of a successful school. Both must be in balance for the school to work well.”

“Balance is achieved when the life-world of a school determines the systems-world of a school. When the systems-world drives the life-world, organizational character erodes.”

In seeking balance, elements of the Total Quality Management paradigm may also be included in school development. Particular elements of development include 1) developing the culture by seeing everyone as both a client and a producer, 2) promoting collaboration through commitment to continuous individual and collective improvement, and 3) viewing the school as a coherent and integrated system.

For LEADERSHIP REFLECTION and FACULTY DISCUSSION:

Can the systems-world and the life-world be defined? Which is driving the other? Why is this happening? What might be done to ensure the life-world is not “colonized” by the systems?

How can we increase student responsibility and a truly operational and internalized code of ethics? What elements of communication, apology, respect, and action need to be clearly defined and practiced in the school?

How can we define the “X-Way (our school’s-way)” in order to pass the tradition and culture of our school on to those who are coming behind us?

Effective schools use many strategies for increasing connection with students and building positive relationships.

1. How are good communication strategies evident in the classroom, the hallways and the playground?
2. How are they evident among all adults in the school?
3. Are teacher’s actions and communications substantially different from that of the leader(s) of the school? In examining communication:
 - a. Is there self-disclosure, including story-telling and modeling successes and challenges?
 - b. Is there a clear sense of having high expectations coupled with a solid repertoire of ideas and a communicated belief with supported action in increasing abilities?
 - c. Is there regular networking?
 - d. Does one find positive rituals and traditions in the classroom?
 - e. Is there a building of community in the classroom and school?
 - f. Do teachers and administrators create some one-on-one time and know the students well (and the parents well when possible)?

From character comes passion and engagement. From passion and engagement comes motivation to excel.

“The soft stuff is the hard stuff” notes R. J. Leider.

Learning Organization Development

What is a learning organization? The term came to attention in business and education with the advent of the book entitled The Fifth Discipline, but there were discussions of such organizational development before, and there have been expansions of the idea after, its publication. In addition to the components mentioned in much of Senge et al.'s work for a learning organization, schools often define the following qualities:

1. The ability for flexibility and adaptive behavior without loss of what is important,
2. Challenging but achievable goals for all are included,
3. Members of the school commit to holding high standards for themselves and others in the community,
4. Members examine mental models and systems frequently with the goal of improvement, not protection, in mind,
5. Members can identify the current status of the school's development as well as connect specific ideas with future vision, and are willing and enthusiastic to take on necessary improvement,
6. Members of the school may gather information and act on information in various ways,
7. There is an institutional knowledge base and high expectations for gathering and sharing knowledge,
8. Information is sought and frequently exchanged from internal and external sources; the information exchange is an "open system,"
9. There are regular feedback systems in the school,
10. There is clear evidence of support and community.

We view life through filters. It is important as a leader, to understand that these filters exist. In developing an organization, we must be able to take off these filters at least from time to time, to ensure that we are seeing the whole picture. If we assume that everyone sees things the way we do, or that the way we see is the only way to see, we may be missing out on incredible opportunities for growth. Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes once remarked, "Many ideas grow better when transplanted into a mind other than the one where they sprang up."

Mapes (1996, p. 11) defines the qualities of learning based on the writings of Charles Handy. Two interesting quotes are:

"Learning is more than studying or being trained. Learning is a way of thinking."

and

"Learning is a starting point and does not have an end point."

These statements are true for the students, for the teachers and for the administration in any learning organization. Basing leadership on the concept of learning, and promoting learning in all areas of the school, the qualities of learning become part of the heart of the school. As Canfield, Hansen and Hewitt note in The Power of Focus (2000) “*Quality is not an act; it’s a habit.*”

Examining Unproductive Behavior

In any leadership position, it’s extremely important to have one’s eye on any areas of unproductive behavior. A leader must constantly review

1. Progress toward outcomes
2. Any benchmarks, semester or annual targets
3. Any new programs and their effectiveness
4. The amount of enthusiasm and motivation evident
5. Identifying necessary training and support
6. The level of delegation and follow-through

In a team, a leader can identify strengths in certain persons of that team. Diversity in thinking and approach can enrich the activity of making important decisions. One person may be more of a “starter” while another may prefer the follow-through. Another may have the global “big picture” while her partner may be a detail and procedures person. Building and developing the right team can help to improve unproductive behavior in the school or classroom.

Final Self-reflection for the School Leader:

(It is suggested that regular and focused time be spent answering each of these questions)

1. How do I know we are clearly making progress toward outcomes?
Where can I see evidence of inadequate progress? What real student-based data do I have? How can I communicate the state of affairs and out plans for improvement to our school community?
2. Do I ever make excuses (publicly or to myself) for the state of being “less than excellent?” Is justification hindering thinking out of the box or hindering action?
3. What benchmarks or targets do we have in place? How do I gather data on these important tools?

4. What new programs have been put into place? Is there any program-overload in any grade level? How do I know these programs are truly effective? If I don't know, how can I figure this out?

5. What is specifically necessary, at this point in time, to motivate teachers and students to reach higher levels? If I don't know, what can I do to figure this out?

6. What training is necessary for the outcomes, goals, vision and programs we have identified as important? Is the training we have done directly related to our vision? Is the training we have done benefiting students? Is the training embedded and on-going? If I don't have this information, what are my specific plans for getting it? If training seems inadequate, what is my specific plan for a training plan based on research and our priority areas?

7. In what way do I delegate effectively? How many people are part of the chain of delegation and leadership? Is this an effective group for all the needs of the school? If not, what is my plan to remediate this challenge area?

More Questions

The Teacher Training Institute (KSRA Inc., Kathryn Knox, Ph.D., President) has used the following list of questions in its consulting work with principals and teachers, to promote discussion and reflection. They are included in this chapter as a reference and resource for principals, leadership teams, and interviewing teams, and may be used in different combinations for varying purposes.

1. In each of the following categories, please rate your level of expertise using 0 for nonexistent skill or knowledge, and 5 for highest (very expert).
 - a. financials___
 - b. special education___
 - c. communication with diverse populations___
 - d. educational development for students___
 - e. professional development for teachers___
 - f. all approved skills programs___
 - g. management and daily operations___
 - h. facility issues___
 - i. safety issues in the school___
 - j. elementary education___

- k. secondary education___
 - l. time management___
 - m. standardized assessments___
 - n. state assessments___
 - o. literacy development___
 - p. mathematics development___
 - q. dealing effectively with personnel issues___
 - r. legal issues (knowledge and application of statutes and laws)___
 - s. leadership___
 - t. visioning___
 - u. data creation and evaluation___
 - v. personal life balance___
 - w. flexibility___
 - x. commitment___
 - y. rapport___
 - z. enthusiasm and the ability to inspire others___
- other:

2. In what three areas above would direct support be most helpful?
3. Tell me about yourself a bit. Are you primarily a concept person or an execution person?
4. Are you inspired by detail or impatient with it?
5. Would you consider yourself more of an aggressive leader or a conservative leader?
6. Do you prefer to work with consensus or go it alone?
7. Do you use intuition in making decisions or primarily rely on the numbers?
8. How do you feel about one-on-one confrontation?
9. How might your teachers describe you?
10. Would you see yourself as more of a scientist or a magician?
11. What type of leader are you? Would you share some descriptive terms?
12. What causes the greatest frustration for you?
13. What three things do you like most about your job?
14. What is your metaphor for education?
15. What is your metaphor for leadership?
16. If you were to describe your school, what three adjectives would you use to describe it?
17. How would you define your school briefly to me as a new parent or community member?
18. What top three objectives or innovations are defined as priority for the coming year? How do they build on prior year goals?
19. What is something you're proud of in your work here?
20. Is there a coherent curricular focus for knowledge and skill across grades that eliminates gaps and builds on prior years?
21. What type of literacy program and mathematics program are you using?

22. What are some challenges and opportunities you see in following the mission of the school?
23. What prepared curriculum or skills programs are in place? Are they used appropriately? Has there been sufficient training?
24. What assessments are being used in the school to assess and monitor progress? Is there an assessment framework so that all understand the purpose and contribution of each part of the data-gathering process? Is there tracking of individual progress with appropriate remediations going on specifically and regularly?
25. What classroom management and student discipline plan is in place? Is it as effective as you'd like?
26. Is there a process for monitoring and remediating student skills development? Please explain it.
27. In what areas has significant progress been made? To what do you attribute this progress? In what areas is there still a gap between objectives and reality?
28. In your own words, state the vision and mission of the school.
29. Please diagram the big picture of the school including vision, mission, objectives and a relationship chart of all participant groups (parents, students, external personnel, administrative staff, teachers, students, community members) in the school—who has access to whom? How are decisions made? (this can be homework)
30. Do you have a philosophy of leadership? Has it been communicated clearly with the faculty?
31. Describe your teacher-recruiting process. Please examine documents about this entire process.
32. What type of on-site professional development is there, if any?
33. Who would you define, besides yourself, as the executive leaders of the school? Of this defined group, what type of leader are each of them? Is there diversity or is there primarily similarity?
34. Are staff part of the leadership group?
35. Who on your staff can be defined as “opinion leaders?” Are they tapped regularly for feedback on progress or issues?
36. In your opinion, are the right people in the right situations?
37. If I were to ask a variety of people in the school about how things are going, what might I hear?
38. What barriers exist to doing your best job, currently?
39. Have you tried implementing any strategies to overcome resistant or rebellious thinking and action?
40. Have win-win or win-lose conflict resolution been more the norm? Can you share a representative example?
41. What roles have had to change, if any? What have been the effects of these changes?
42. What reward structures are in place for extra work, idea development, extraordinary effort, if any?

43. Have policies been evaluated to ensure coherence with mission and objectives? Do new policies need to be created?
44. In your opinion, are there processes or procedures that interfere with operations or with advancing the mission of the school?
45. Are there specific and urgent funding needs? If so, what avenues are being pursued to increase funding? In the meantime, what is being done?
46. How will the success of the objective/innovations/programs that have been put into place be measured? Are there any consequences I should be aware of for not attaining success?
47. Describe the appraisal process for teachers and staff, and share documents.
48. Is there a merit-based or performance-based component to appraisal? If so, how does this work?
49. Is there a clearly defined, effective plan for professional development? Are you satisfied with it?
50. Does everyone understand the appraisal, salary and professional development system?
51. Please provide a list of performance goals for the school and for individual teachers. Are there checkpoints to assess progress and alter pace or approach?
52. In your opinion, what is the ONE biggest challenge and the ONE biggest opportunity facing the school today?
53. What is something else you'd like to say or that needs to be discussed?

Final Thoughts

Leadership is crucial to the development of an excellent school in which fundamental student learning, achievement, character-building and professional responsibility are part of the culture and daily work. Schools are incredibly busy places and there are many deadlines, administrative duties and areas of oversight for which the school leader is responsible. However, the work that goes on in schools is far too important for our students and the future of the society, to leave to chance or to subsume under the “tyranny of the moment.” Though there are many ideas, concepts and questions to consider in this manual, it is suggested that the leader(s) begin to implement one or two of the ideas, honestly confront personal challenge areas with the goal of improving them, and put into place structures for deep discussion and professional practice.

Networking, skill development, and scholarly study should infuse the leader’s work, becoming a model of holding high standards for self-discipline. It is hoped that this compilation of information will be a window opening wide to let in light for the upcoming journey.

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