

Central Office Transformation Toolkit

Strengthening school district central offices in the service of improved teaching and learning

Tools for District Leaders:

Readiness Assessment: Finding Your Starting Points for Central Office Transformation

Creating Your Theory of Action for Districtwide Teaching and Learning Improvement

Principal Instructional Leadership:
Evidence-Gathering Tool for Instructional Leadership Directors

Commissioned by



Central Office Transformation Toolkit

The Central Office Transformation Toolkit is a set of three tools designed for district leaders engaging in “central office transformation:” a major reform of their central offices to significantly strengthen the extent to which the office operates as a primary support system for helping principals improve teaching and learning at scale (Honig et al., 2010). According to

research supported by the Wallace Foundation and conducted by a team at the University of Washington, leaders of transforming central offices:

Research-Based Tools for Central Office Transformation

The tools in this kit were created by the Center for Educational Leadership and Meredith I. Honig, Associate Professor of Education, at the University of Washington. They are based on a ground-breaking study, conducted by Honig and colleagues at the University of Washington, on how three school district central offices undertook to radically transform their central office into a true teaching and learning support system. That study, *Central Office Transformation for District-wide Teaching and Learning Improvement*, funded by the Wallace Foundation, investigated central office transformation efforts in three urban districts. These findings have since been confirmed and elaborated by a follow-up study, conducted by Honig and colleagues, involving six additional districts of varying sizes. In designing the tools we also drew on our direct experience helping districts of various sizes across the country get started with central office transformation.

1. Create learning-focused partnerships between executive-level central office leaders (often known as Instructional Leadership Directors) and principals, dedicated to helping principals grow as instructional leaders who lead powerfully for improved instruction in every classroom.
2. Redesign the rest of the central office so it functions as a high-performing service organization providing high-quality, relevant and differentiated instructional, human resources, business, and other services that support the learning-focused partnerships and other results for schools.
3. Lead by teaching and learning — engage all central office staff in continuously finding, designing and implementing progressively more effective services and supports for districtwide teaching and learning improvement.

Transforming your central office in the service of improved teaching and learning throughout your district is a major undertaking. It means more than just making some changes in your organizational

chart, adding or eliminating units, or improving the efficiency of your long-standing operations. Instead, central office transformation demands that leaders take a deep look at the current work of each and every central office staff person and ask: To what extent can we show that this

work matters to improving teaching and working districtwide? And if it does not, how can we change to improve the alignment between our core work and real results for students? In districts the researchers observed, nearly all of the central office staff were working to realign daily activities with the ultimate goal of improving teaching and learning.

Whether you work in a district with a handful of central office staff members or a big city school district, change of this sort isn't easy and involves many parts. The work will unfold over time.

You can use these tools in the sequence below or as appropriate to where you are in the transformation process.

1. Readiness Assessment: Finding Your Starting Points for Central Office Transformation.

This assessment tool can help you identify starting places for central office transformation that might be particularly productive in your district. The tool does not tell you the perfect, fool-proof starting place. Rather, this assessment guides you through a series of questions to generate information you can use in discussions with key players in your district. It will help you identify the first phases of your central office transformation process based on particular considerations such as ease or urgency. It will help you investigate where you stand in regard to learning-focused partnerships; high-quality, relevant, differentiated services for schools; leading for change by teaching and learning; and communicating change effectively with staff.

2. Creating Your Theory of Action for Districtwide Teaching and Learning Improvement. This tool is designed to help you ensure that your central office transformation plan is grounded in a clear analysis of what is working and not working for your students. It will help identify how strengths and weaknesses in classroom teaching, principal instructional leadership, and central office practice, structures, and systems are contributing to your students' current performance. The tool helps you use that analysis to generate a ***theory of action***, or an evidence-based story, that explains the specific changes you intend to make in the central office and why and how those will drive other necessary changes that will strengthen teaching and learning at scale. It also helps you to identify the supports that practitioners throughout the system will need in order to actually make the changes you have identified.

3. Principal Instructional Leadership: Evidence-Gathering Tool for Instructional Leadership Directors. In the districts researchers observed, leaders created positions that the researchers called Instructional Leadership Directors (ILDs), executive-level staff charged with spending nearly all their time supporting principals' growth, both one-on-one and in principal training networks. Researchers found that those ILDs whose work was associated with reported and observed progress in principals' instructional leadership approached their work as *master teachers* of principals: i.e., they engaged in the teaching methods that in other settings are associated with improving practice. In our experience, to do such a job well, ILDs must become very familiar with their principals' strengths and weaknesses as instructional leaders and attend to their growth over time. We developed this tool to help ILDs continuously assess principals' instructional leadership; develop a clear sense of what counts as evidence for instructional leadership; and create systems for collecting and organizing evidence of principals' instructional leadership.

CENTRAL OFFICE TRANSFORMATION TOOLKIT

Readiness Assessment:

Finding Your Starting Points for Central Office Transformation¹

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| ASSESSMENT PART 3: Leading by teaching and learning, communicating change | P. 11 |

About the Readiness Assessment

If you are exploring this tool, that means you have at least begun to consider how research and experience on central office performance might help *your district central office* strengthen how it supports improved teaching and learning for all your students. To be sure, realizing such results for students takes significant capacity-building at the school level. Such capacity-building, at a minimum, must help each and every teacher perform in ways that help students learn to high levels and that support principals in their growth as instructional leaders — that is, in leading to strengthen the quality of teaching in all their classrooms. Central offices have vital roles to play in proactively helping principals and teachers build such capacity. Research and experience underscore this vital role for school district central offices in supporting schools' success at scale. This body of work highlights that central offices that build their own capacity for such leadership engage in what we call “central office transformation.”

Transforming your central office in service of improved teaching and learning throughout your district means more than making some changes in your organizational chart, adding or eliminating units, or improving the efficiency of your long-standing operations. Instead, central office transformation demands looking deeply at the current work of each and every central office staff person and asking: To what extent can we show that work matters to improving teaching and working districtwide? And if it does not, how can we change how we work to improve the alignment between our core work and real results for students? In districts the researchers observed, nearly all of the central office staff were working to realign daily activities with the ultimate goal of improving teaching and learning.

Whether you work in a district with a handful of central office staff members or a big city school district, such change isn't easy and involves many parts. The work will unfold over time, probably with various fits and starts. But where should you begin?

¹ Suggested citation: Honig, M.I., Silverman, M., & Associates. Readiness Assessment: Finding Your Starting Points for Central Office Transformation, Version 1.0. Seattle, WA: The University of Washington School of Education.

Research-Based Tools for Central Office Transformation

The tools in this kit were created by the Center for Educational Leadership and Meredith I. Honig, Associate Professor of Education, at the University of Washington. They are based on a ground-breaking study, conducted by Honig and colleagues at the University of Washington, on how three school district central offices undertook to radically transform their central office into a true teaching and learning support system. That study, *Central Office Transformation for District-wide Teaching and Learning Improvement*, funded by the Wallace Foundation, investigated central office transformation efforts in three urban districts. These findings have since been confirmed and elaborated by a follow-up study, conducted by Honig and colleagues, involving six additional districts of varying sizes. In designing the tools we also drew on our direct experience helping districts of various sizes across the country get started with central office transformation.

What this tool will help you do. We have developed this assessment tool to help you identify starting places for central office transformation that might be particularly productive in your district. The tool does not tell you the perfect, fool-proof starting place. Rather, this assessment guides you through a series of questions to generate information you can use in discussions with key players in your district to help you identify first phases of your central office transformation process based on particular considerations such as ease or urgency.

We developed this assessment from research on central office performance and our experience helping districts of all sizes use that research to launch central office transformation efforts. The assessment is organized around three core ideas that research has shown are fundamental to improved central office performance:

1. Learning-focused partnerships with principals to help them grow as instructional leaders.
2. The provision of high-quality, relevant, differentiated services to schools in support of improved teaching and learning districtwide.
3. Leadership that takes a teaching and learning stance — leadership that helps staff throughout the system learn to lead improvements in their work and the work of others and that continuously learns from the process how to improve their own leadership.

The tool guides you through a series of statements about the extent to which your current central office functions in the ways the central office transformation research suggests. In our experience, most districts do not yet function in most of those ways. But by taking a close, honest look at the similarities and differences between your current work practices and those involved with central office transformation, you deepen your understanding of central office transformation and begin to pinpoint areas where you might most productively start.

Who should use this tool? This tool assumes that the transformation process begins with the superintendent and his/her executive team who serve as executive sponsors of the work. We recommend the superintendent and executive team complete the assessment first to generate some initial priorities and also to familiarize themselves with the tool. Then, identify any other participants whose input would be helpful at their current stage of initiative development. Other possible participants include principals, teachers, and central office staff. In deciding on additional participants,

consider whose input will make this assessment process more inclusive and informative and whose participation you want to foster early in your transformation work.

How to use this tool. The following are some suggested steps for completing the tool, based on our experience with processes that have worked well for districts of various sizes.

1. Spend some time, individually and as an executive leadership team, familiarizing yourselves with the research and experience on central office transformation. For example, you might read and discuss the original central office transformation research report or other articles or publications derived from that work. (For a list and copies, please see <http://education.washington.edu/areas/edlps/profiles/faculty/honig.html>.) However you do it, engagement in the core ideas of central office transformation will help participants better understand what the assessment items are asking. But you may complete the assessment at any time. The assessment is not a quiz of your knowledge of central office transformation, which will necessarily grow over time. Rather, the assessment reflects your current thinking about where your district stands on main dimensions of central office transformation, as best you understand them now.
2. Then, allocate adequate time for the assessment. You may want to complete the assessment all together in the meeting or individually and reconvene to discuss results. Consider whether you simply want participants to complete the assessment and share their results aloud or whether some tabulation of all results may be useful.
3. Reflect on and discuss results. At the end of each section of the assessment we suggest reflection/discussion questions. For example, we prompt you to consider: Which of the issues addressed in this tool rises to the top for you as a starting point for your work? We recommend prioritizing starting points with which you can achieve clear gains quickly, to help generate confidence in the reform. You might also prioritize areas of weakness that, if neglected at the outset, will jeopardize your efforts. We also prompt you to consider: What issues do you need to know more about before you act? What supports will you need to move people and practices toward the ready side of the scale in your key areas? Your answers to these questions will give you a set of next steps to move ahead. Feel free to revise those discussion questions to reflect how you think about prioritizing the work.

You may use this tool by itself or in tandem with other central office transformation tools in this set such as “Creating Your Theory of Action for Central Office Transformation” available through the University of Washington Center for Educational Leadership. Some of the questions in this assessment will give you insight into issues that your theory of action will need to address. Conversely, working through your theory of action likely will also highlight areas where you need more preparation before launching into the full transformation process.

ASSESSMENT PART 1:

Learning-focused Partnerships

Central offices that support effective teaching at scale support all school principals in leading for such results, through roles for principals that some call “instructional leadership” or “strategic human capital management.” We have found that one effective way to increase supports for principals’ development as such leaders is to create learning-focused partnerships between principals and executive-level staff who help principals grow in that capacity. These central office staff, whom the research refers to as Instructional Leadership Directors (ILDs), dedicate the vast majority of their time to hands-on work with principals, one on one and in principal professional learning communities, with the express focus on helping principals develop as instructional leaders. In very small districts, central offices productively create an ILD function by having the superintendent and one or two other top-level administrators carve out significant time for such work. You may or may not already have staff in place whose job is to support principals. The questions below will help you take a deeper look at the scope of your current work in this area and compare it with what we have found about how learning-focused partnerships can support principal instructional leadership at scale.

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree | DK/NMI* |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Our district has clearly defined the principalship as instructional leadership. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. That definition of the principalship as instructional leadership (referenced in question #1) informs all central office functions (e.g., principal hiring, evaluation, professional development, facilities). | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. The relationship between principals and the central office in this district is a <i>partnership</i> relationship. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. We have central office staff dedicated to supporting the growth of all principals as instructional leaders. <i>If you agree/strongly agree with question #4, please address #5-15. If you disagree/strongly disagree with question #4, skip to #16-21.</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

***DK/NMI = Don’t Know; Need More Information**

| Those Staff (referenced in question #4, above): | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree | DK/NMI |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 5. Are in positions that sit on or report directly to the superintendent’s cabinet or the equivalent. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Were hired for their orientation to the work of principal support as teaching as opposed to mainly supervision or evaluation. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Are formally charged with spending at least 75% of their time working directly with principals on their professional growth as instructional leaders. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Actually spend at least 75% of their time working directly with principals on their professional growth as instructional leaders. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. Have a low enough number of principals for whom they are responsible that they can be successful at helping all their principals grow as instructional leaders. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. Have a strategic mix of principals necessary for building a strong principal professional learning community. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. Actually approach their work with principals as teachers and learners rather than mainly supervisors or evaluators. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12. Have relationships with their principals around principals/professional growth as instructional leaders that are high in trust. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13. Receive professional development that helps them engage in their work as teachers and learners. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14. Have the support of the superintendent and other senior central office leaders who proactively protect their time for work on principals’ growth as instructional leaders. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15. Are held accountable for helping principals grow as instructional leaders using specific, meaningful metrics of such performance. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

| If you do not yet have staff dedicated to supporting the growth of all principals as instructional leaders (referenced in question #4): | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree | DK/NMI |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 16. The superintendent and other key central office leaders are aware of the need to have executive-level staff dedicated to supporting the growth of all principals as instructional leaders. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 17. Our district has staff in other positions who could serve well in these dedicated principal instructional leadership support positions. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 18. Our district should be able to attract people to these positions who have the ready capacity to help principals grow as instructional leaders. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 19. Our principals are open to having a central office staff person working with them as a partner to strengthen their instructional leadership practice. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 20. Key central office staff are aware of the need to provide professional development and protection of staff time to help these staff be successful. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 21. Our principals are currently organized into subgroups whose composition can compromise a strong principal professional learning community. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Learning-Focused Partnerships: Reflections and Next Steps

Which of the above issues rises to the top for you as a starting point for your work — because you can achieve clear gains in this area soon, because weakness in this area will jeopardize your broader effort, or because you otherwise believe that they relate to a key starting place for you?

What issues do you need to know more about before you can act?

What kinds of support will you need to move people and practices toward the “agree” side of the scale in your key areas?

ASSESSMENT PART 2:**High-quality, Relevant, Differentiated Services**

For the learning-focused partnerships to be successful, Instructional Leadership Directors and principals need the rest of the central office to function in ways that support the districtwide priority of helping all principals grow as instructional leaders. When districts move in this direction, they transform each of their functions. Every single function — from curriculum and instruction to human resources to buildings and grounds — shifts its orientation from compliance, crisis-management, or the oversight of funding streams to the provision of high-quality, relevant, differentiated services, those likely to help schools build their capacity for improved results for all students. In so doing, staff in each function shift their relationship with schools from a one-size-fits-all approach to the provision of differentiated services for schools — those strategically matched to schools’ needs and strengths. The central office transformation research calls such differentiation a *case management* approach to working with schools. Central office staff that are moving in this direction are turning away from operating in silos to creating new collaborative ways of working across traditional central office functions—an approach to work the research calls *project management*. Such districts also work ably with data to continuously improve their own performance in supporting schools — a process called *performance management*.

The questions below aim help you think about how each of your current central office units or functions operates in relation to this second set of core ideas involved with central office transformation: a service orientation involving case management, project management, and performance management.

For the most complete and useful assessment of where you stand, copy the following grid and answer its questions for every one of your central office units including: Accountability and Assessment, Budget, Curriculum and Instruction, Facilities, Human Resources, Nutrition, and Technology. Because central office transformation implicates each and every one of your central office staff members, the following grid is relevant to all units, even if you have not previously thought of them as centrally involved with improving teaching and learning.

| Name of function/unit: _____ | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree | DK/NMI |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. This function/unit operates with a well-articulated theory of action meaningfully linking the work of each of its staff members to tangible improvements in principal instructional leadership and effective teaching in every classroom. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Staff working in this unit/function: | | | | | |
| 2. Use a common, district-wide definition of high-quality teaching to inform their work. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Use a common, district-wide definition of the principalship as instructional leadership to inform their work. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Understand that their work primarily involves providing performance-oriented services to schools — services likely to help schools improve their capacity for high-quality teaching in every classroom. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Actually provide services to schools differentiated by school staff members' capacity for high-quality teaching. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Routinely use data on each school's needs and strengths to inform and revisit which services they provide to schools. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Collaborate with staff <u>within the unit/function</u> to help improve the relevance and quality of services they provide to schools. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Collaborate with staff <u>in other units/functions</u> to help improve the relevance and quality of services they provide to schools. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. Take an orientation to their work as problem solving. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. Are held accountable for helping schools improve teaching and learning using specific, meaningful metrics of such performance. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. Receive regular, intentional professional development to help them be successful. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

High-Quality, Relevant, Differentiated Services: Reflections and Next Steps

Which of the above issues rises to the top for you as a starting point for your work — because you can achieve clear gains in this area soon, because weakness in this area will jeopardize your broader effort, or because you otherwise believe that they relate to a key starting place for you?

What issues do you need to know more about before you can act?

What kinds of support will you need to move people and practices toward the “agree” side of the scale in your key areas?

ASSESSMENT PART 3:

Leading by Teaching and Learning, Communicating Change

As the previous sections of this assessment make clear, the kinds of changes that central office transformation involves are a significant undertaking. Leading such efforts requires hands-on leadership by superintendents and other executive-level staff who actively sponsor the work. The research calls this form of leadership “leading as teaching and learning” because it involves leaders: teaching others throughout the central office how to engage in this work and continuously learning from the process how to strengthen their own leadership of the effort. For many executive-level staff, this form of leadership marks a shift from outward-facing or hands-off leadership to leadership that engages them deeply in the day-to-day work of their central office.

The questions below prompt each member of the executive team to reflect on their own leadership in relation to leadership as teaching and learning. We suggest each executive staff member answer the following questions with a focus on their own leadership. You may also want to adapt the questions so they inquire about the overall leadership of the executive team.

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree | DK/NMI |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. This district has a well-articulated theory of action that demonstrates how changes in the central office relate to improving the quality of teaching and learning district-wide. <i>If you disagree or strongly disagree, please skip to #4.</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. All staff in this district are at least somewhat familiar with that theory of action. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. All staff in this district can see where their individual work fits in the theory of action. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your own leadership? | | | | | |
| 4. I measure my success based on the quality of the services I provide to schools rather than mainly other measures or the efficiency with which I relate to schools. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I spend substantial time each week helping other staff lead in ways that improve the quality of services the central office provides to schools. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. I am prepared to shift where I focus my time from activities that do not meaningfully strengthen district-wide teaching and learning to those that do. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree | DK/NMI |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 7. I am prepared to invest (funding, time, etc.) in the professional development of myself and my central office staff to grow our capacity to provide services that strengthen teaching and learning district-wide. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. I understand that if I truly engage in central office transformation, chances are that not all my current staff will be suited for the new work. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. Our school board members understand that improving teaching and learning should be the top priority of the central office. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Leading by Teaching and Learning: Reflection and Next Steps

Which of the above issues rises to the top for you as a starting point for your work — because you can achieve clear gains in this area soon, because weakness in this area will jeopardize your broader effort, or because you otherwise believe that they relate to a key starting place for you?

What issues do you need to know more about before you can act?

What kinds of support will you need to move people and practices toward the “agree” side of the scale in your key areas?

CENTRAL OFFICE TRANSFORMATION TOOLKIT

Creating Your Theory of Action for Districtwide Teaching and Learning Improvement

WHAT'S IN THIS TOOL:

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In this era of accountability, where the outcomes of American public education are highly scrutinized and hotly debated, school district central offices are under enormous pressure to lead instructional improvement and realize results. In response, many central offices are taking a close look at their staffing, organization, and practices and asking how they can be reimagined and redesigned to accelerate teaching and learning for all of their students. Recent research funded by the Wallace Foundation has given us a comprehensive picture of what this central office transformation looks like when it is done effectively. The research found that districts that have successfully transformed their central offices for better teaching and learning have focused on three areas of change:

1. Creating strong learning-focused partnerships with principals that help principals grow as instructional leaders,
2. Providing schools with high-quality, relevant services that directly support improved instruction, and
3. Leading the change process by teaching and learning, together with staff throughout the system, what the new work is and how to engage in it.

Recreating the central office around these themes in a way that responds to the strengths and needs of an individual district and its people is a major undertaking that requires a clear rationale and the commitment, time, and engagement of many participants throughout the system if it is to succeed.

Research-Based Tools for Central Office Transformation

The tools in this kit were created by the Center for Educational Leadership and Meredith I. Honig, Associate Professor of Education, at the University of Washington. They are based on a ground-breaking study, conducted by Honig and colleagues at the University of Washington, on how three school district central offices undertook to radically transform their central office into a true teaching and learning support system. That study, *Central Office Transformation for District-wide Teaching and Learning Improvement*, funded by the Wallace Foundation, investigated central office transformation efforts in three urban districts. These findings have since been confirmed and elaborated by a follow-up study, conducted by Honig and colleagues, involving six additional districts of varying sizes. In designing the tools we also drew on our direct experience helping districts of various sizes across the country get started with central office transformation.

What this tool will help you do. This tool is designed to help a team of district leaders generate central office transformation plans that are grounded in a clear analysis of what is working and not working for their students and of how strengths and weaknesses in classroom teaching, principal instructional leadership, and ultimately central office practice, structures, and systems contribute to current student performance. The tool then helps the team to use that analysis to generate a **theory of action**, or an evidence-based story, that explains the specific changes you intend to make in the central office and why you believe these are the ones that will strengthen teaching and learning throughout the system. It also invites you to think about how you will engage, learn from, and communicate with staff throughout the system, in a spirit of teaching and learning, about why and how the system needs to change.

This tool will help you to:

1. Develop a well-elaborated conception of the problem or situation for students, teachers, and leaders that motivates your actions in the first place.

A good theory of action does not simply elaborate which actions you plan to take. Rather, good theories of action stem from a careful analysis of what is motivating you to act in the first place. Too often leaders jump immediately to actions without fully examining or otherwise appreciating what is happening for students and adults. As a result, sometimes we invest considerable time, funding, and other resources in particular activities before we realize that what we have set out to do won't actually get us where we want to go. If we had only suspended action and carefully examined what is happening in our settings, we might not have embarked on the wrong course.

2. Make your leadership the core of the theory of action.

The tool prompts you to consider not problems in general but problems of *practice* — problems in what people throughout the system do day-to-day and how they think about their work — that contribute to results for students. In particular, it asks you to look at the role of central office leaders. Even leaders who identify themselves as highly self-reflective and self-critical

often focus on what school principals, school teachers, and parents need to do, without acknowledging or recognizing how their own actions or inactions are contributing to the conditions they are working to fix.

3. Create an evidence-based rationale for all parts of the theory.

There's no shortage of problems and improvement strategies in education. But which problems are most pressing? Which problems are actually problems? Which strategies might actually work to address a particular problem? A theory-of-action approach to change sees the exploration of these questions as fundamental to charting a promising course for improvement. Exploring these questions requires relentless articulation of your rationale for your claims about problems and solutions and continual scrutiny of evidence to support your claims.

4. Identify the supports that practitioners will need in order to actually make the changes you have identified.

For example, if one of your leadership actions is that leaders will begin to provide high-quality feedback to teachers during classroom observations, what kinds of supports might leaders need to engage in those activities? If your teacher actions include that teachers will differentiate instruction effectively, what other conditions besides leaders' feedback matter to teachers taking those actions? If you claim that teachers differentiating instruction will impact student achievement in reading, consider what other conditions affect student achievement in reading beyond what teachers do and identify those. The tool will walk you through these questions.

How to use this tool. The design of this tool assumes that its initial users are the superintendent and executive team. Given the depth of the inquiry process suggested here, the fact that it may extend over several sessions, and the need for discussion and consensus, it will probably be useful to have a facilitator to lead the group.

Beyond the initial team, though, practitioners at every level throughout the district will have important insights and feedback that help to shape the theory of action and make it stronger. Theories of action take time and many minds to develop, and never reach a final state. Rather, they are living documents that leaders continue to revisit and refine as they work with others to take action, collect evidence, and consider changing conditions. The conclusion of this tool asks you to think about how you will engage board members, parents, principals, teachers, central office staff, and perhaps even students in forming and carrying out your plans.

If you have not already done so, your team will find it helpful to work through another tool in this package, **Readiness Assessment: Finding Your Starting Points for Central Office Transformation**, before you work through this tool. The assessment takes you through a number of specific questions about your district's culture, instructional expertise, central office budgetary and staffing capacity, leadership preparation, and a number of other areas that may bring issues to the surface that your theory of action should address.

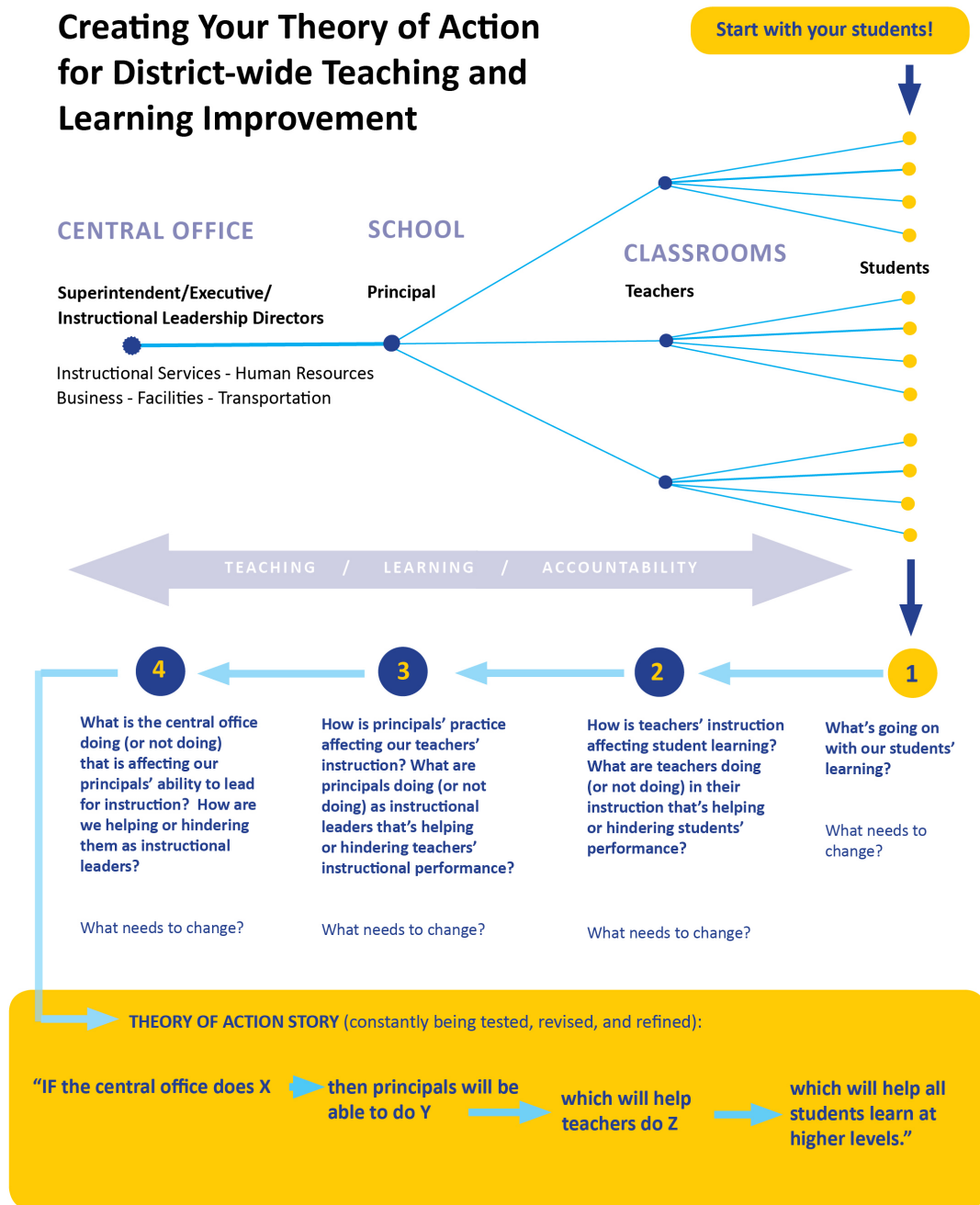
Theory of Action 1: A First Pass

To begin, spend some time studying the theory of action graphic on the next page. To help you keep the big picture in mind as you begin the process, the image shows the connections that exist between the key players in the district: central office, principals, teachers, and students. (Note that this graphic is not intended to represent a district's organizational chart or reporting lines, but simply to depict a set of relationships.)

Since the ultimate concern of central office transformation is with improving student learning, you'll note that the graphic encourages you to begin deriving your theory of action not by jumping directly to perceived problems with teaching, principals, or the central office, but by focusing first on specific problems of student learning. It then asks you to work backward from there, analyzing how current practice, from teaching back through principal leadership to central office leadership and operations, is part of a chain of causality that produces the results in student performance that you see. This process yields a simple way to state a theory of action to undergird your work: ***"If the central office does X, then principals will be able to do Y, which will help teachers do Z, which will help all students to learn at higher levels."***

Continue to graphic on next page.

Creating Your Theory of Action for District-wide Teaching and Learning Improvement



Now, to get started with a first rough draft theory of action that is specific to your district, work through the table on the next page, starting at the right and working down through each column before moving to the left. Then use your answers to rough out a basic theory of action at the bottom of the table. Your initial theory can be simple and impressionistic, just to give you a feel for the logic and the bare bones of your story. After you complete this beginning exercise, it's important to continue on to the more detailed questions on the following pages, which will help you drill down into the causality and conditions for success in each part of the system in much more depth, giving your theory more power and accuracy.

| | | | START HERE: |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4 Central Office | 3 Principals | 2 Teachers | 1 Students |
| <p>4a. What is the central office doing (or not doing) that's affecting our principals' ability to lead for instruction? How are we helping or hindering them as instructional leaders?</p> <p>Impressions and observations:</p> | <p>3a. How is principals' practice affecting our teachers' instruction? What are principals doing (or not doing) as instructional leaders that's helping or hindering teachers' instructional performance?</p> <p>Impressions and observations:</p> | <p>2a. How is teachers' instruction affecting student learning? What are teachers doing (or not doing) in their instruction that's helping or hindering students' performance?</p> <p>Impressions and observations:</p> | <p>1a. What's going on with our students' learning?</p> <p>Impressions and observations:</p> |
| <p>4b. What needs to change in central office practice to better support principal instructional leadership?</p> | <p>3b. What needs to change in principal practice to better support teachers' instructional performance?</p> | <p>2b. What needs to change in teacher practice to better support student learning?</p> | <p>1b. What needs to change in our students' learning?</p> |
| <p>ROUGH TAKE THEORY OF ACTION: </p> | | | |
| <p>If the central office [does x][fill in the blank].....</p> | <p>then principals will be able to.....[fill in the blank]</p> | <p>which will help teachers to.....[[fill in the blank]</p> | <p>so that student learning will.....</p> |

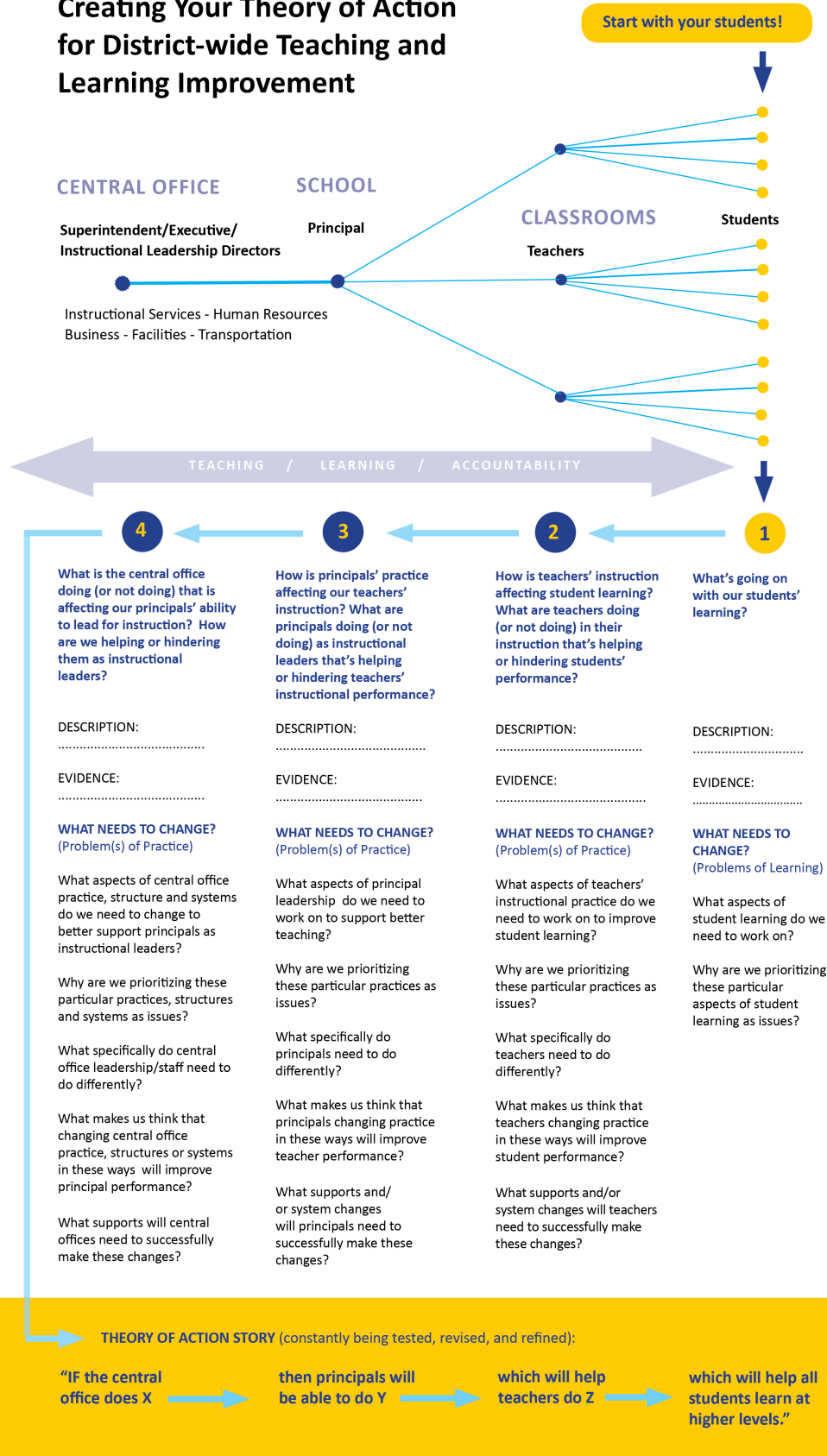
Theory of Action 2: Taking It Deeper

While your first broad-brush theory gives you a good starting point for discussion, it will not yet be detailed enough or sufficiently grounded in the evidence to give you a solid basis for effective action. To take your thinking to the next (deeper) level, take some time to look at the expanded theory of action graphic on the next page. This version includes more probing questions about your evidence for your claims about what's going on in leadership, teaching and learning in your district, why you are prioritizing particular issues as problems, and what you think will help to remedy those problems and why. After looking over the graphic, continue on to page 9 to address the individual prompts on student learning, teaching practice, principal leadership, and the central office. (You may want to print the full graphic and give it to everyone, so that participants can keep the relationships between students, teachers, principals, and central office leaders in mind as you work through the questions.)

FACILITATION SUGGESTIONS: You may choose either to have each of the participants do some private writing in response to the prompts first, and then capture their thoughts on wall charts; or simply facilitate and chart a group discussion about each prompt from the beginning. Either way, you will want to have the group's thinking visible to all. While there may be a desire to skip ahead through the sequence of prompts, we suggest you try to keep to the order given. This will help to maintain the logic of working from students' needs back to the central office, and from problem descriptions to evidence to the rationale for change and the supports that will be needed for success.

Note that working your way all the way through all of these questions will be, and should be, a much longer process than your first-take theory of action discussion. As you make your way through the process, you may turn up areas where you need to collect more evidence (by looking at student data, conducting classroom walkthroughs, or having conversations with key school-based personnel) or to consult the research on effective practice before your theory can be solidified. You don't need to hold back from sketching out your theory until you fill in all such gaps (you will be revisiting it frequently in any case). But do note areas where you need more information.

Creating Your Theory of Action for District-wide Teaching and Learning Improvement



Working through the Prompts: Evidence and Rationale

1. STUDENT LEARNING

What's going on with our students' learning?

A. DESCRIPTION or ANECDOTE:

Which student in our system well captures what most concerns us about student learning in our system? What specifically is happening for that student? For example, what does a typical day look like for that student in terms of his or her learning experience? How prevalent do we think these issues are?

B. EVIDENCE/DATA:

What evidence of student performance do we have that substantiates our concerns above? (from performance data, observations/rounds/walkthroughs, and/or conversations with teachers and parents)

What needs to change in our students' performance? (Problems of learning)

C. Given our observations and the evidence above, what aspects of student learning do we need to work on?

D. Why are we prioritizing these particular aspects of student learning as issues?

E. What changes in teacher practice or other instructional resources do we think will make a difference?

Working through the Prompts: Evidence and Rationale

2. TEACHING PRACTICE

How is our teachers' instruction affecting our students' learning?
What are teachers doing (or not doing) in their instruction that's helping
or hindering students' performance?

A. DESCRIPTION/ANECDOTE:

Which one teacher in our system well captures what most concerns us about the quality of teaching in our system given the issues we see in student learning? What specifically does that teacher do in his or her practice that concerns us? For example, what might that teacher be doing during a typical math lesson in terms of how he or she interacts with students?

B. EVIDENCE/DATA:

What evidence do we have (or could we collect or consult) that substantiates the problem that this teacher represents — for example, how prevalent that kind of teaching is among which teachers in which schools, and how it's affecting student performance?

| |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>What needs to change in teachers’ practice? (Problem(s) of practice)</p> |
| <p>C. Given the issues we see in student learning, what aspects of teachers’ instructional practice do we need to work on to improve student learning?</p> |
| <p>D. Why are we prioritizing these particular practices as issues?</p> |
| <p>E. What specifically do teachers need to do differently?</p> |
| <p>F. What makes us think that teachers changing their practice in these ways will improve student learning?</p> |
| <p>G. What supports and/or system changes will teachers need to make these changes successfully? (Consider also external forces, such as unions, that will have a bearing on necessary changes.)</p> |

Working through the Prompts: Evidence and Rationale

3. PRINCIPALS' PRACTICE

How is our principals' practice affecting our teachers' instruction? What are our principals doing (or not doing) as instructional leaders that's helping or hindering teachers' instructional performance?

A. DESCRIPTION/ANECDOTE:

Given the issues you've identified in teacher practice, which one principal in your system well captures what most concerns you about the quality of principal leadership in your system? What specifically does that principal do in their practice that concerns you? For example, what might that principal be doing on a typical Wednesday morning?

B. EVIDENCE/DATA:

What evidence do you have (or could you collect or consult) that could help you understand the scope of the problem that principal represents — for example, how prevalent that kind of leadership is among which principals in which schools, and how it's affecting teacher performance?

What needs to change in principal leadership? (Problem(s) of practice)

C. Given the issues we've identified in teacher performance, what aspects of principal leadership do we need to work on?

D. Why are we prioritizing these particular practices as issues?

E. What specifically do principals need to do differently?

F. What makes us think that principals changing their practice in these ways will improve teacher performance?

G. What supports and/or system changes will principals need to make these changes successfully? What resources will be required?

Working through the Prompts: Evidence and Rationale

4. CENTRAL OFFICE PRACTICE, STRUCTURE, AND SYSTEMS

What is the central office doing (or not doing) that's affecting our principals' ability to lead for instruction? How are we helping or hindering them as instructional leaders?

A. DESCRIPTION/ANECDOTE:

Given the issues we've identified in principal instructional leadership practice, which one central office administrator in our system well captures what most concerns us about the quality of central office leadership in our system? What specifically does that central office administrator do in his or her practice that concerns us? For example, what have we observed that central office administrator doing or not doing in a meeting, or in visiting (or not visiting) schools?

B. EVIDENCE/DATA:

What evidence do we have (or could we collect or consult) that could help us understand the scope of the problem that central office administrator represents — for example, how prevalent that kind of leadership is among which central office staff? In which units?

What needs to change in the central office? (Problem(s) of practice)

C. Given the issues we've observed in principal instructional leadership, what aspects of central office staff practice, structure, and systems do we need to change to better support principals as instructional leaders?

D. Why are we prioritizing these particular practices, structures and systems as issues?

E. What specifically do central office leadership/staff need to do differently? How do structures and systems need to change?

F. What makes us think that changing central office practice, structure or systems in these ways will improve principal performance?

G. What support and/or system changes will central offices need to make these changes successfully? What new resources will be needed?

Theory of Action 3: Putting It All Together

Once you’ve finished working through the questions above sequentially, you’ll want to consider your responses to all of them simultaneously, working back from the issues for student learning on the right all the way to central office practices, structures and systems on the left as shown in the graphics. In your discussion, highlight the relationships between the issues you’ve identified. In particular, it will be helpful to focus on your answers to question C (“What needs to change?”) in each area in order to promote effective instructional leadership and better teaching. Provided that you’ve developed a solid rationale for what needs to change in each case, by capturing your answers to that question, you should now be able to generate a revised theory of action that goes deeper than your first:

| REVISED THEORY OF ACTION: | | | |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| If the central office [does x]..... | then principals will be able to..... | which will help teachers to.... | so that student learning will..... |
| | | | |

As mentioned, even this revised theory of action will be subject to continual reassessment and revision as you lead, teach and learn your way through the work of transforming the central office in support of improved student learning. Even now, looking at your answers to questions B (about evidence) and F (“What makes us think this will work?”), it may be clear to you that you need to gather stronger evidence or consult more research in order to back up parts of your theory.

Questions you might consider as you look ahead from here to develop an action plan:

1. How will we fill in any current gaps in our evidence or research base as we look at our theory of action?
2. How will we **use** our theory of action? Which audiences do we need to engage in dialogue with about our theory of action and why?
3. What are the most important things that we need to convey to these audiences about our theory of action and the need for change? In what ways do we need their support?
4. What process will we follow to regularly revisit and update our theory of action, either formally or informally, as our work moves forward over the coming months and years?

CENTRAL OFFICE TRANSFORMATION TOOLKIT

Principal Instructional Leadership Evidence-Gathering Tool for Instructional Leadership Directors

WHAT'S IN THIS TOOL:

Evidence Gathering for Four Dimensions of Principal Instructional Leadership:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-------|
| Vision, Mission and Culture Building | P. 4 |
| Improvement of Instructional Practice | P. 7 |
| Allocation of Resources | P. 10 |
| Management of People & Processes | P. 13 |

Increasingly, school districts across the country are working to create strong learning-focused partnerships between their principals and executive-level staff in the central office. In the districts studied for their work on central office transformation, leaders created positions that the researchers called Instructional Leadership Directors (ILDs), executive-level staff charged with spending nearly all their time supporting principals' growth, both one-on-one and in principal training networks. Researchers found that those ILDs whose work was associated with reported and observed progress in principals' instructional leadership approached their work as *master teachers* of principals: i.e., they engaged in the teaching methods that in other settings are associated with improving practice.

What this tool will help you do. In our experience, to do such a job well, ILDs must become very familiar with their principals' strengths and weaknesses as instructional leaders and attend to their growth over time. We developed this tool to help ILDs continuously assess principals' instructional leadership, develop a clear sense of what counts as evidence for instructional leadership, and create systems for collecting and organizing evidence of principals' instructional leadership.

The tool offers ILDs a framework for gauging principals' instructional leadership capacities combined with an instrument for gathering evidence of their individual strengths and weaknesses over multiple contacts. Such knowledge is the necessary foundation for an ILD's continuing joint work with each principal, differentiated for that principal's needs. Critical examination of evidence about principals' leadership, conducted as joint work, also helps ILDs to model the use of evidence about teaching and learning for their principals and others throughout the system.

Research-Based Tools for Central Office Transformation

The tools in this kit were created by the Center for Educational Leadership and Meredith I. Honig, Associate Professor of Education, at the University of Washington. They are based on a ground-breaking study, conducted by Honig and colleagues at the University of Washington, on how three school district central offices undertook to radically transform their central office into a true teaching and learning support system. That study, *Central Office Transformation for District-wide Teaching and Learning Improvement*, funded by the Wallace Foundation, investigated central office transformation efforts in three urban districts. These findings have since been confirmed and elaborated by a follow-up study, conducted by Honig and colleagues, involving six additional districts of varying sizes. In designing the tools we also drew on our direct experience helping districts of various sizes across the country get started with central office transformation.

The tool lays out a vision of the principal's role as instructional leader using the 4 Dimensions of Instructional Leadership (4D) developed at the Center for Educational Leadership at the University of Washington College of Education. It articulates the core ideas, guiding questions, and possible observables for each dimension along with specific suggestions for where and how to observe principals' practice and artifacts that may be helpful to collect in building evidence. The criteria and observables in the tool can and should be evaluated and adapted to meet a district's own criteria for principal leadership.

Broadly, the tool is intended to help ILDs meet these research-based criteria for success:

1. Continuously assess principals' instructional leadership.

Instructional leadership is not reflected in any one-time event; rather, it reflects a stance of working extensively with teachers both inside and outside instructional settings to develop insights and raise questions that lead to further joint actions designed to improve teaching and learning. ILDs need to take a similar stance in the relationships they build with their principals and allow such a disposition to inform and shape continuous instructional leadership improvement.

2. Develop a clear sense of what counts as evidence for instructional leadership.

Without a clearly articulated framework to guide their examination of principals' work, it is too easy for practitioners to make claims and develop hunches without specific evidence in mind. ILDs must become smart about both the kind of evidence that would be helpful for their efforts to develop strong mental models of their principals' instructional leadership and ways to assess the quality of such evidence.

3. Create systems for collecting and organizing evidence of principals' instructional leadership.

Most would agree that it is hard to have any sort of influence on that which hasn't been noticed and named. ILDs need to have systematic, intentional systems to collect evidence of their principals' instructional leadership in order to develop powerful one-on-one assistance relationships with them in service of better teaching and learning.

We suggest that a facilitator, working with a group of district executive leaders in the ILD role, invite the group, first, to consider and amend the criteria in this tool as needed to align them with any existing district frameworks. ILDs can then begin to use the tool in individual work with principals. Reconvening after a period of time to practice using the tool, it may be useful for ILDs to reflect on the following questions:

1. What did you notice about how you have been documenting principals' instructional leadership compared to what the tool prompts you to do? In particular:
2. Were some parts of your observation more elaborated than others? If so, which ones? (That is, do you tend to focus on certain dimensions of principals' instructional leadership more than others?)
3. Do you seem to be privileging certain kinds of evidence over others? For instance, do you mainly collect evidence on teachers' practice or does your evidence elaborate what principals are doing? Do you seem to favor quantitative over qualitative data? Do you seem to get most of your evidence from classroom walkthroughs rather than other sources?
4. As you look over your picture of principals' practice, consider: The tool prompts you to provide evidence in relation to each of the questions. Do your notes include specific pieces of evidence or mostly claims?
5. As you worked with the tool over time, did you find that certain parts of the tool were more useful than others or more important to focus on now with your principals? If so, which ones?
6. How can you make sure that you are doing this evidence-gathering *with* principals (rather than *to* them), as joint work?
7. How do you think you will use the evidence you've been gathering to differentiate your support for these principals?

| 4D Instructional Leadership Dimension | VISION, MISSION and CULTURE BUILDING |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>4D Core Ideas (What are the key qualities ILDs are trying to get a sense of and further develop in their principals?)</p> | <p>School leaders, committed to collective leadership, create a reflective, equity-driven, achievement-based culture of learning focused upon academic success for every student</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through collaboration and shared leadership, staff, students and the school community embrace a vision of academic success for every student and work toward clear goals focused on student learning. • School leaders foster a culture of learning, cultural responsiveness and high expectations for every student and every adult. • School leaders create and maintain a results-focused learning environment of continuous improvement that is responsive to individual students’ needs and the diversity among the students. |
| <p>4D Guiding Questions (What are the important questions ILDs try to ask themselves when developing an understanding of those they lead in order to better teach them?)</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do the school’s environment and day-to-day interactions among students, staff and families say about what is valued in the school community? 2. How does the school leadership communicate and drive the school’s instructional agenda? 3. How does the school leadership organize the learning environment to respond to cultural and linguistic diversity and the varying learning and social needs of students? 4. How do the school leadership and community use evidence of student success and learning needs to drive collaboration? 5. How does the school leadership encourage leadership within others? |
| <p>Potential Evidence for This Dimension (What might an ILD take notice of or pay attention to while developing an understanding of a principal’s current capabilities and learning needs?)</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Visual representation of the shared vision, mission, goals and progress of the school (e.g., hallway displays, school artifacts, documents, academic progress on tests, projects, attendance, and other school performance measures) 2. Visual representations of the culture of the students and school community 3. Common language among students, staff, and parents when discussing the goals and vision of the school and the desired experiences and outcomes for students 4. Staff collaboration and discourse aligned with the school’s goals and instructional focus |

| 4D Instructional Leadership Dimension | VISION, MISSION and CULTURE BUILDING |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <p>Artifacts and documents to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School newsletters • Teacher and student handbooks • Principal messages to the school and the community • School or principal’s calendar to see activities planned that reflect celebrations, rituals, traditions, and other events that help to perpetuate culture • Recordings of student interviews • Collections of teacher study group documentation • Digital records of teacher professional learning sessions • Samples of student work analysis protocols • Data from student, parent, and staff surveys |
| <p>Possible Observation Activities (How might an ILD go about developing a better sense of where he or she might want to further grow and develop a principal?)</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Notice what is displayed in hallways and classrooms. 2. When talking to anyone in the school community, ask “What is important here in this school? What matters most?” 3. Listen for the level of expectation in student and staff “talk” and whether it reflects high expectations for students and staff. 4. Take note of how the principal uses multiple forms of data (e.g., leading and lagging indicators of student learning and teacher performance) to inform students, staff, and the school community. 5. Take note of how the principal shares the academic performance for the school and the research-based instructional plans being implemented to address the students’ needs. 6. Develop awareness of what the staff reads and studies together as evidenced in the principal’s professional learning plan. 7. Examine the principal’s portfolio or collection of the pertinent information he/she has shared with the staff on improving leading, learning and teaching. 8. Pay attention to the posted or otherwise visible codes of student and adult conduct focused on respect, responsibility, and positive relationships. |

| Observation Notes for Improvement of Learning Vision, Mission and Culture Building | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| Observation 1 Date: | |
| Observation 2 Date: | |
| Observation 3 Date: | |
| Observation 4 Date: | |

| 4D Instructional Leadership Dimension | IMPROVEMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>4D Core Ideas for This Dimension (What are the key qualities ILDs are trying to get a sense of and further develop in their principals?)</p> | <p>Based upon a shared vision of effective teaching and learning, school leaders establish a focus on learning; nurture a culture of continuous improvement, innovation and public practice; and develop, monitor, and evaluate teacher performance to improve instruction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School leaders use data, evidence and inquiry to analyze student learning as well as to assess both teacher and leadership practice. • School leaders use a research-based instructional framework to observe teacher practice, engage in cycles of inquiry, and plan individual and collective professional development and coaching needs. • School leaders use data and evidence of student learning and teacher practice to inform feedback to teachers. |
| <p>4D Guiding Questions (What are the important questions ILDs try to ask themselves when developing an understanding of those they lead in order to better teach them?)</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What evidence is there that school leaders’ efforts are resulting in the improvement of teaching practice and student learning? 2. How is leadership distributed to ensure collaboration and collective leadership and that the tasks of instructional leadership are accomplished? 3. What data does the school leadership collect to learn about trends in instructional practice as well as student performance and problems of learning? 4. What is the evidence that among staff there is a shared vision of effective teaching and learning and that the improvement of instructional practice is guided by that vision? 5. What role does a research-based instructional framework play in the observation, analysis, feedback and inquiry about instructional practice? 6. How does the school leadership use monitoring of instruction and evaluation in the improvement of instruction? |
| <p>Potential Evidence for This Dimension (What might an ILD take notice of or pay attention to while developing an understanding of a principal’s current capabilities and learning needs?)</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The principal’s portfolio of data that describe: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The strengths and weaknesses in student performance in relation to Common Core and content standards b. The trends in problems of instructional practice across disciplines/grade levels/populations of students 2. A professional learning plan for staff that is job-embedded and driven by the data on student performance and the school improvement plan 3. The principal’s modeling effective practice with staff 4. The principal’s use of a variety of data to evaluate teachers |

| 4D Instructional Leadership Dimension | IMPROVEMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <p>5. The principal’s and staff’s use of data analysis protocols by grade level, department, and whole staff.</p> <p>6. Recent school and classroom data that is posted for staff, students, parents, and other visitors to view</p> <p>7. Teachers’ use of multiple forms of student data to plan instruction</p> <p>8. Principals’ conducting frequent observations as reflected in their calendars, journals or other forms of documentation</p> <p>Artifacts and documents to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff use of an instructional framework to ground instructional practice • Principal’s classroom observation and evaluation forms • School improvement plan • Professional learning plan • Agendas from staff meetings/professional learning sessions • Instructional framework • Classroom observation form • School-generated student performance data reports and presentations • Collection of principal/staff-generated theories of action based on the data analyzed • Collection of principal/staff-generated reflections about instructional actions they’ve taken with students and the efficacy of their efforts • Feedback sheets from staff development sessions or whole faculty study group learning sessions • Data analysis and student work protocols |
| <p>Possible Observation Activities (How might an ILD go about developing a better sense of where he or she might want to further grow and develop a principal?)</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Talk with students about their learning targets and levels of performance. 2. Observe a professional learning session/staff meeting. 3. Observe video of principal giving feedback to a teacher. 4. Engage in a data-focused discussion with the principal about school and student performance and the instructional plan for improvement in relation to Common Core and content standards. 5. Go on a classroom walkthrough with the principal using the school’s instructional framework. 6. Engage in a grade-level or subject-area conversation with principal and teachers planning a unit of study or assessing student understanding. |

| Observation Notes for Improvement of Learning Improvement of Instructional Practice | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| Observation 1 Date: | |
| Observation 2 Date: | |
| Observation 3 Date: | |
| Observation 4 Date: | |

| 4D Instructional Leadership Component | ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>4D Core Ideas for This Dimension (What are the key qualities ILDs are trying to get a sense of and further develop in their principals?)</p> | <p>School leaders allocate resources strategically so that instructional practice and student learning continue to improve.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School leaders use financial resources, time, facilities, technology and partnerships innovatively and equitably to accomplish the goal of powerful teaching and learning for all students. • The school leadership team has articulated clear processes and procedures for instructional support. • School leaders use data to make equitable decisions about the allocation of resources. |
| <p>4D Guiding Questions (What are the important questions ILDs try to ask themselves when developing an understanding of those they lead in order to better teach them?)</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How does the distribution of resources (i.e., time, money, technology, space, materials and expertise) relate to improved teaching and learning in this school? What evidence do you have? 2. How do school leaders use instructional coaches, mentors and other teacher leaders to help improve instructional practice? 3. How are decisions made about staff allocation and student interventions to ensure that the varying needs of students are met? 4. How do school leaders use staff time and collaborative structures to drive the instructional program? |
| <p>Potential Evidence for This Dimension (What might an ILD take notice of or pay attention to while developing an understanding of a principal’s current capabilities and learning needs?)</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The principal’s documentation of the data that drive the equitable allocation of financial, personnel, and instructional support resources 2. The opportunities for staff collaboration on data analysis, student work, and instructional and intervention planning leading to further instructional actions 3. The principal’s annual calendar with key dates for critical school experiences such as interim assessments; topics and dates for professional learning that reflect strategic use of resources <p>Artifacts and documents to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School budget(s) • School schedule • Campus map with programs listed (utilization of space, proximity & location of special classes, etc.) • Schedule of staff meetings and professional learning sessions • Allocation of FTE and part time staffing positions (evidence of equitable |

| 4D Instructional Leadership Component | ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES |
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| | <p>distribution of teachers by qualification and experience across levels of coursework)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student achievement data disaggregated by student groups, particularly when specific interventions or specialists have been targeted for resources • Faculty, staff, student, and parent survey data regarding the perceived needs of the school • Records of professional learning investments (conference attendance, courses remunerated, professional development resourced) • Memoranda of Understanding or strategic plans with community organizations or other partnerships |
| <p>Possible Observation Activities (How might an ILD go about developing a better sense of where he or she might want to further grow and develop a principal?)</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engage in a discussion with the principal about the school budget and the rationale for his/her allocation of resources. 2. Go on a walkthrough with the principal to observe the use of instructional coaches and other resources-in-action throughout the school. 3. Go on a walkthrough and engage in discussions with principal/teachers on student technology distribution and as learning tool (access in classrooms, depth of use). 4. Talk to teachers about the opportunities for teacher collaboration and planning as well as the resources they need to instruct students well. 5. Observe principal’s facilitation with partner groups (PTSA, community organizations, external partners, etc.). |

| Observation Notes for Improvement of Learning Allocation of Resources | |
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| Observation 1 Date: | |
| Observation 2 Date: | |
| Observation 3 Date: | |
| Observation 4 Date: | |

| 4D Instructional Leadership Dimension | MANAGEMENT OF PEOPLE & PROCESSES |
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| <p>4D Core Ideas for This Dimension (What are the key qualities ILDs are trying to get a sense of and further develop in their principals?)</p> | <p>School leaders engage in strategic personnel management and develop working environments in which teachers have full access to supports that help improve instruction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School leaders strategically recruit, hire/retain, induct, support and develop the most qualified staff as well as engage in succession planning. • School leaders employ critical processes such as planning, implementing, advocating, supporting, communicating and monitoring in all leadership responsibilities including curriculum, instruction and school improvement planning. • School leaders create supportive working environments, which include professional development opportunities, time and space for collaboration, and access to professional learning communities. |
| <p>4D Guiding Questions (What are the important questions ILDs try to ask themselves when developing an understanding of those they lead in order to better teach them?)</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What evidence exists that the school leadership implements strategic efforts to recruit, hire/retain, induct, support and develop the best staff? 2. What data and processes does the school leadership use in planning for instructional and school improvement planning? 3. What evidence exists of the staff’s access to professional growth opportunities? |
| <p>Potential Evidence for This Dimension (What might an ILD take notice of or pay attention to while developing an understanding of a principal’s current capabilities and learning needs?)</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The principal’s documentation of recruitment strategies, including perceived staffing needs based on student achievement goals 2. The principal’s documentation of leadership team meetings that reflect collective and individual thinking for curricular, instructional, and school improvement growth 3. The principal’s criteria for professional learning communities: how they are formed, how the success of PLCs is measured and celebrated 4. The principal’s strategy for differentiated support for teachers using evidence of instructional effectiveness/student learning grounded in an instructional framework <p>Artifacts and documents to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building leadership team meeting notes, minutes, and/or other documentation • Sample interview questions, selection protocols (hiring rubrics), and other associated recruitment/selection documents • |

| 4D Instructional Leadership Dimension | MANAGEMENT OF PEOPLE & PROCESSES |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handouts/PowerPoint slides of professional learning community presentations or teacher learning presentation • A calendar of professional learning opportunities on offer • Intake/outtake interview notes for new and/or leaving faculty or staff members |
| <p>Possible Observation Activities (How might an ILD go about developing a better sense of where he or she might want to further grow and develop a principal?)</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discuss the hiring process employed by the principal, including how he/she influences the applicant pool. 2. Ask a group of teachers how curricular and instructional decisions are made and communicated in this school and by whom. 3. Gather the protocols/resources that principals offer teachers to further grow their professional learning communities. 4. Engage in professional development offered by staff members based on learning opportunities that have been supported by the principal in his/her strategic planning (e.g., professional learning community celebrations, teacher conference presentations). 5. Ask the principal how he/she decides which professional learning communities and/or opportunities are worthy of his/her support. |

| Observation Notes for Improvement of Learning Management of People & Processes | |
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| Observation 1 Date: | |
| Observation 2 Date: | |
| Observation 3 Date: | |
| Observation 4 Date: | |