**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.

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.

**Research-Based Tools for**

**Central Office Transformation**

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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.

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** |
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| **4D Core Ideas**(What are the key qualities ILDs are trying to get a sense of and further develop in their principals?)  | School leaders, committed to collective leadership, create a reflective, equity-driven, achievement-based culture of learning focused upon academic success for every student* 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.
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| **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?) | 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?
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| **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?) | 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

**Artifacts and documents to consider:*** 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
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| **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?) | 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.
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| **Observation Notes for Improvement of Learning****Vision, Mission and Culture Building** |
| Observation 1Date: |  |
| Observation 2Date: |  |
| Observation 3Date: |  |
| Observation 4Date: |  |

| **4D Instructional Leadership Dimension** | **IMPROVEMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE** |
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| **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?) | 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.* 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.
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| **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?) | 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?
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| **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?) | 1. The principal’s portfolio of data that describe:
2. The strengths and weaknesses in student performance in relation to Common Core and content standards
3. The trends in problems of instructional practice across disciplines/grade levels/populations of students
4. A professional learning plan for staff that is job-embedded and driven by the data on student performance and the school improvement plan
5. The principal’s modeling effective practice with staff
6. The principal’s use of a variety of data to evaluate teachers
7. The principal’s and staff’s use of data analysis protocols by grade level, department, and whole staff.
8. Recent school and classroom data that is posted for staff, students, parents, and other visitors to view
9. Teachers’ use of multiple forms of student data to plan instruction
10. Principals’ conducting frequent observations as reflected in their calendars, journals or other forms of documentation

**Artifacts and documents to consider:*** 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
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| **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?) | 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.
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| **Observation Notes for Improvement of Learning****Improvement of Instructional Practice** |
| Observation 1Date: |  |
| Observation 2Date: |  |
| Observation 3Date: |  |
| Observation 4Date: |  |

| **4D Instructional Leadership Component** | **ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES** |
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| **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?) | School leaders allocate resources strategically so that instructional practice and student learning continue to improve.* 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.
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| **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?) | 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?
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| **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?) | 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

**Artifacts and documents to consider:*** 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 distribution of teachers by qualification and experience across levels of coursework)
* 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
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| **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?) | 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.).
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| **Observation Notes for Improvement of Learning****Allocation of Resources** |
| Observation 1Date: |  |
| Observation 2Date: |  |
| Observation 3Date: |  |
| Observation 4Date: |  |

| **4D Instructional Leadership Dimension** | **MANAGEMENT OF PEOPLE & PROCESSES** |
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| **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?) | School leaders engage in strategic personnel management and develop working environments in which teachers have full access to supports that help improve instruction.* 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.
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| **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?) | 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?
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| **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?) | 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

**Artifacts and documents to consider:*** Building leadership team meeting notes, minutes, and/or other documentation
* Sample interview questions, selection protocols (hiring rubrics), and other associated recruitment/selection documents
* 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
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| **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?) | 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.
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| **Observation Notes for Improvement of Learning****Management of People & Processes** |
| Observation 1Date: |  |
| Observation 2Date: |  |
| Observation 3Date: |  |
| Observation 4Date: |  |