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REGIONAL COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY

LITERATURE REVIEW
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Literature Review Method

Our literature search was guided by purposefully selected key words, authors, and sources. These search parameters were determined based on our research team's academic and practice experience in the field of educational leadership and are summarized below.

Key words
instructional leadership; principal leadership; teacher professional learning; teacher professional development; student achievement; student outcomes; professional learning community; collaborative inquiry; instructional rounds

Key authors
Darling-Hammond, Day, Elmore, Fullan, Guskey, Hallinger, Hargreaves, Harris, Hattie, Heck, Hitt, Jacobson, Katz, Leithwood, Muijs, Neumerski, Orphanos, Stiggins, Sun, Tucker

Key sources
Educational Administration Quarterly; Education Canada; Educational Leadership; International Journal of Educational Management; Journal of Educational Administration; Journal of School Leadership; Leadership and Policy in Schools; Phi Delta Kappan; Principal Leadership; Review of Educational Research; School Effectiveness and School Improvement; School Leadership & Management; Visible Learning

Given the extensive literature on principal leadership and the relatively short timeline, our review made extensive use of systematic reviews and meta-analyses of the literature as well as review papers. These research methods collect, combine, and summarize the key ideas of the field, providing a collective summary or state of the field that highlights where our understanding is currently situated, based on the most current and rigorous research in the area. We focused on publications from Australia, Canada, New Zealand the UK, and the USA. Whenever possible, we included publications from the last five years and reviews from the last ten years, in order to most accurately reflect the state of our understanding of principal leadership within the context of publicly-funded school education. Our literature search was guided by the following question:

> **What principal leadership factors contribute to shifts in educators' thinking and practice that address persistent problems related to attaining equitable achievement and well-being outcomes for every student?**

Principal Leadership Factors that Contribute to Shifts in Educators' Thinking and Practice

Our review of the principal leadership literature identified twelve categories associated with factors that contribute to shifts in educators' thinking and practice, with the underlying assumption that these shifts ultimately support valued student outcomes. These categories are organized according to three broad themes and elaborated in the following table.

Principal Leadership Factors that Contribute to Shifts in Educators' Thinking and Practice		Key Findings from Literature Review
Focus	Vision, values, and goals	Principals create, articulate, and foster shared vision, values, and goals among their school community that reflect local needs and interests as well as system policies and priorities.
	Pedagogy and student outcomes	Principals emphasize high quality pedagogy and learning experiences for all students in order to attain equitable achievement and well-being outcomes.
	Capacity-building for educators	Principals support individual and collective capacity-building among educators through purposeful professional learning aligned with school vision, values, and goals.
	Positive school culture	Principals cultivate a positive school culture in which all educators, students, parents, and community partners feel safe, supported, and valued.
Enactment	Evidence-informed decision making	Principals—in collaboration with their school community as appropriate—use evidence from classrooms, schools, and the district to identify trends in student outcomes, determine directions for school improvement, and monitor progress toward school goals.
	Efficient organizational structures	Principals establish and manage efficient organizational structures that enable productive collaboration among their school community and improve physical, social, and emotional conditions that support quality instruction and learning.
	Strategic resourcing	Principals advocate for and allocate financial, human, instructional, professional learning, and program resources that support the attainment of valued student achievement and well-being outcomes.
	Active engagement in teaching and learning	Principals are actively involved in collaborative planning and monitoring of curriculum, instruction, and assessment programs through school-based professional learning and instructional rounds in classrooms.
Supports	Responsive approach	Principals adapt their approach to leadership in response to the contextual and cultural needs of their educators, students, parents, and community partners.
	Shared leadership	Principals promote shared leadership among educators, students, parents, and community partners, building on capacity within the school community to collaborative work toward school goals.
	Trust and respect	Principals recognize and build on diversity to build relationships with educators, students, parents, and community partners that are rooted in trust and respect.
	Open Communication	Principals communicate openly with their school community regarding school vision, goals, and progress; listen to and act on feedback from community members; and engage in courageous conversations to maintain collective focus on school vision, values, and goals.

Ongoing Challenges for Principal Leadership

Despite the empirically-based principal leadership factors that contribute to shifts in educators' thinking and practice and support equitable achievement and well-being outcomes for students, principals face ongoing challenges in their role. Our review highlighted five primary challenges that principals must navigate.

1. Principal leadership has an indirect impact on student outcomes but a more direct impact on the quality of instruction, which directly impacts student outcomes.

- quality of instruction matters most for student achievement (Hallinger, 2014; Jacobson, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2008)
- consistency of teacher quality matters (i.e., students' experience from year to year), therefore principals should focus on "intermediate targets" that have proven to impact students' learning—instructional environment, teacher effectiveness (Heck & Hallinger, 2014)
- principals provide and support professional development opportunities for educators to enhance quality instruction, but "pinpointing effective professional development practices continues to elude researchers and practitioners (Neumerski., 2012)

  Student opportunity to learn with a succession of effective teachers in schools with a more consistent instructional environment and stronger instructionally focused leadership, appears to produce "compounding benefits." This calls attention to the role of leadership not only in increasing "average teaching effectiveness" but also in reducing variability in effectiveness across teachers who comprise the faculty within a given school. (Hitt & Tucker, 2016, p. 674)

2. Competing leadership models detract from the overarching goals of leadership/fail to encompass the contextual nature of leadership.

- effective leadership practices cannot be attributed to a singular model of leadership (i.e., instructional, transformational, or distributed) (Day & Sammons, 2013; Hallinger, 2011)
- leadership models share many commonalities with subtle differences (Leithwood & Sun, 2012) and vary in perceived importance over time; blended approaches are key to school success (Bush & Glover, 2014)
- shared leadership, collaborative leadership, and distributed leadership are often prescribed based on values versus data (Hallinger, 2011; Hitt et al., 2018; Hitt & Tucker, 2016)

  The means through which leadership is linked to learning cannot be reduced to a list of dispositions, strategies or behaviors. No such list could fully account for the contextually contingent nature of successful leadership practice. (Hallinger, 2011, p. 129)

3. Principals must balance their role as lead learners with competing school priorities.

- as instructional leaders, principals need a sound grasp of basic knowledge and skills within a broad and balanced curriculum (Day & Sammons, 2013; Hitt et al., 2018)
- principals must regularly provide their staff with both formative and evaluative feedback which "calls attention to what needs improvement, but also positively reinforces what is being done correctly" (Hitt & Tucker, 2016, p. 555)

- principals must manage behaviour, attendance, resources, environment (Day & Sammons, 2013); build the school as a professional learning community (Leithwood & Sun, 2012); and forge partnership outside school with parents and the community in order to impact students (Jacobson, 2011)

  Systems often pull leaders in many directions, but the research asserts that leaders who never lose site of the technical core of schools and also devote considerable effort to organizational issues will serve their schools well. (Hitt & Tucker, 2016, p. 556)

4. Principals must be responsive to the unique needs of their school communities in order to create contexts that support valued instructional practices and student outcomes.

- all principal leadership behaviours are contextualized and must be responsive to context; understanding leadership can't be isolated from context (Neumerski, 2012)
- principals hold the formal authority, responsibility, and discretion for creating the very conditions and supports that promote student achievement" (Hitt & Tucker, 2016, p. 562)
- principals must mitigate barriers to effective teaching and learning, support students from diverse backgrounds and with a range of learning needs, (Hitt & Tucker, 2016)

  Student achievement is positively influenced when principals collaboratively create a vision and aligned goals for their schools, foster supportive organizational environments for students and teachers, develop teachers and their instructional capacity, and connect with the broader community (Hitt & Meyers, 2018, p. 5)

5. Principals must concurrently support local and systemic visions and goals.

- principals need to ensure consistent, interrelated goals for teachers and students that reflect both systemic priorities and local nees (Bush & Glover, 2014; Neumerski, 2012)
- goals for student outcomes have become increasingly complex and reflect both "raising standards and widening the social goals of schooling" (Day & Sammons, 2013; p. 40)

  Leadership is the exercise of influence on organizational members and diverse stakeholders toward the identification and achievement of the organization's vision and goals. (Leithwood, 2012, p. 3)

A Thought-Provoking Leadership Review

While our literature review focused on principal leadership, Neumerski (2012) presents a unique perspective. In her review, she explores leadership through a distributed lens—incorporating principal, coach, and teacher leadership literature— to develop a deeper understanding of the "how of leadership". Neumerski (2012) asserts that exploring the interactions among leaders, between leaders and followers, and between leaders and context and is needed to fully understand how instructional leadership impacts desired outcomes in teaching and learning. She claims that organizing studies according to principal, coach, and teacher instructional leadership has constrained our knowledge about how leaders across roles improve instruction. We have shared some thought-provoking quotes from Neumerski's review to stimulate thinking and discussion.

The Problem
We have created separate bodies of knowledge, each typically published in its own subset of academic journals. What is missing is an integrated literature that centers on how various instructional leaders lead, regardless of position, title, or combination of leaders. (p. 312)

Instructional Leadership Interactions
We have largely failed to uncover the interactions (as opposed actions or behaviors) among leaders and their followers. We also need to consider these interactions with context, moving beyond lists of decontextualized leadership behaviors, which appear prominently in the principal literature and are emerging in the teacher leader and coach literatures. (p. 336)

Instructional Leadership and Context
Lists of decontextualized [leadership] behaviors make it difficult to provide guidance for leaders about when, where, and how they might enact such behaviors. On the other hand, to suggest that each context involves completely different ways of learning is also problematic. (p. 327-8)

Instructional Leadership, Teaching, and Learning
Providing opportunities for teachers to learn how to improve instruction is sometimes confounded with actual learning. Altering structures can create the necessary conditions for teachers to learn to improve their instruction, but structures alone are unlikely to create desired schoolwide changes. (p. 333)

Future Directions
If we begin with what it is we want students to learn, we can then determine what kinds of instruction will lead to that goal, what teachers need to learn to be able to implement that kind of instruction, and, finally, how leaders facilitate teacher learning around that targeted instruction. But this work will not be without its challenges. A broader, more inclusive unit of analysis may lead us to different hypotheses, methodologies, and analyses, ones that hopefully will better enable us to get at the "how." Yet getting at how instructional leaders improve instruction is methodologically hard, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Finding ways to measure characteristics and behaviors of leaders seems more straightforward; getting inside the process of how leaders enact those behaviors in context to improve instruction is another matter entirely. (p. 336)

Annotated Bibliography of Valuable References

Bush, T., & Glover, D. (2014). School leadership models: What do we know? *School Leadership and Management, 34*(5), 553-571.

Bush and Glover review current theoretical and empirical leadership models (i.e., instructional, managerial, transformational, authentic, distributed, teacher, system, and contingent) and conclude that blended approaches to leadership that include instructional leadership are key to school success.

Hallinger, P. (2011). Leadership for learning: Lessons from 40 years of empirical research. *Journal of Educational Administration, 49*(2), 125-142.

Hallinger reviews empirical studies over the past 40 years to develop a research-based model of "leadership for learning" that incorporates a range of leadership sources and emphasizes the importance of being responsive to the school context.

Heck, R.H., & Hallinger, P. (2014). Modeling the longitudinal effects of school leadership on teaching and learning. *Journal of Educational Administration, 52*(5), 653-681.

Heck and Hallinger test a multilevel, cross-classified model that seeks to shed light on the paths through which leadership influences student learning and conclude that leaders play a critical role in shaping the instructional environment and coordinating the instructional practices of teachers.

Hitt, D., & Tucker, P. (2016). Systemic review of key leader practices found to influence student achievement: A unified framework. *Review of Educational Research, 86*(2), 531-569.

Hitt and Tucker identify and synthesize peer-reviewed, empirical research on how leader practices influence student achievement to inform how school leaders should direct their effort and assert that leader practices are expected of school principals but often distributed across informal leaders in the school or school community.

Hitt, D. & Meyers. C. (2018). Beyond turnaround: A synthesis of relevant frameworks for leaders of sustained improvement in previously low-performing schools. School Leadership and Management, 38(1), 4-31.

Hitt and Meyers develop a literature-based model of what sustained improvement leadership practices entails for turnaround schools and posit that sustainability requires protecting the positive trajectory and transitioning the organization into sustained growth.

Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2008). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership. *School Leadership and Management, 28*(1), 27-42.

Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins summarize the findings from a large literature review on successful school leadership practices and argue that more large-scale, mixed-methods empirical research is needed in this field.

Neumerski, C. (2012). Rethinking instructional leadership, a review: What do we know about principal, teacher, and coach instructional leadership and where should we go from here? *Educational Administration Quarterly, 49*(2), p. 310-347.

Neumerski explores what scholars know and don't know about instructional leadership across principal, coaching, and teacher leadership literature and asserts that exploring the interactions among leaders, between leaders and followers, and between leaders and context is needed to fully understand how instructional leadership impacts desired outcomes in teaching and learning.

Robinson, V., Lloyd, C., & Rowe, K. (2008). The impact of leadership on student outcomes: An analysis of the differential effects of leadership types. ***Educational Administration Quarterly***, ***44*(5), 635-674.**

Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe examine the relative impacts of different types of leadership on students' academic and non-academic outcomes and identify five leadership dimensions that leaders must apply responsively within their contexts of practice.