

What Your Colleagues Are Saying . . .

“You feel exhausted hearing all the roles of a leader: aspirers of high expectations and great ambitions, builders of collectives of learners and professional development, social influencers among leaders and teachers, leaders of teaching and learning, those who apply principles of improvement, amplifiers of effective instruction, architects of productive and inviting climates, beacons of trust, supporters of clarity about purpose and instruction, chief engagement officers of teacher and student learners, evaluators of impact, accountability officers, leaders of improvement, implementation scientists, and great managers. The alternative is a school of independent contractors where great teaching and leadership are by chance. *How Leadership Works* makes a convincing case about how to bring all these roles to fruition and how to have time left over to enjoy the success of all in the school (as well as your own successes).”

—**John Hattie**, Author, University of Melbourne

“To enhance your skills as a teacher of teachers, *How Leadership Works: A Playbook for Instructional Leaders* invites you to be an engaged learner. If you are looking for a nightstand book to passively peruse before sleep, this is not the book for you. If you are ready to roll up your sleeves and invest in some serious reflection about your own leadership practices around a powerful set of ideas, then dig in! This book is organized around a set of modules that include learning intentions and success criteria, vignettes, research-based practices, and space for reflection on what you will *keep*, *stop*, or *start* doing with what you have learned. It includes a variety of learning tools that will not only support you in your learning but will become a valuable set of tools for you to use as you support the thinking and learning of the teachers you lead. In the end, the thinking and learning of your students will blossom and grow.”

—**Megan Tschannen-Moran**, Professor of Educational Leadership,
William & Mary School of Education

“This publication is very timely. As I read the book, I was able to visualize how I would use it to provide professional development for my leadership team. The book called many of my actions into question, which has already reshaped my thinking as a leader. I would recommend this publication to school and district leaders.”

—**Audrey White-Garner**, Elementary Principal, Richland School District One

“This playbook helps leaders break down complicated scenarios into manageable next steps. The exercises felt relevant to help me work through a leadership challenge, and determine the next right step, without taking an overwhelming amount of effort or time. This playbook would be beneficial for both novice and veteran leaders.”

—**Jennifer Douglas**, Principal, Voris CLC, Akron Public Schools

How LEADERSHIP WORKS

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HOW LEADERSHIP WORKS

a playbook
for Instructional Leaders

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Visit the companion website at
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Introduction

Exploring Leadership

Administrators and teacher-leaders face a number of tasks, ranging from lunchtime supervision to budget and discipline of students, all essential to keep a school operating. Unfortunately, for many educational leaders, pressing responsibilities related to school operations take precedent and interfere with their ability to serve as instructional leaders at the same time. Consequentially, educational leaders are prevented from spending time observing classroom instruction and talking to teachers about their professional practices that impact student learning.

Getting leaders into classrooms is important if school improvement efforts are to flourish. While necessary, spending time in classrooms and providing feedback is not sufficient to create lasting change. Lasting change requires an agreement on quality so that the leader and the teacher can have a productive conversation about the impact the instructional moves have on learning. We will return to this point later, but our experiences with school improvement efforts suggest that reaching agreements on quality are crucial if professional development efforts and administrative or peer feedback are to be effective.

As an example, think back to a conversation you've had with a teacher following a classroom observation. Say, for example, that you just returned from a conference that validated and extended your understanding of the importance of building on students' background knowledge. As part of the observation, you notice several opportunities that the teacher missed to build and activate background knowledge. The conversation you have might go something like this:

Leader: How do you think the lesson went?

Teacher: Great, I thought that my students were all engaged.

Leader: Yes, true, they all seemed interested in the topic. Did you think about what they might already know about the topic? Or what they might not know about it?

Teacher: No, not really. I think that they learned a lot from the experience. Did you hear them talking with each other?

Leader: Yes, they were talking and asking good questions. But what did they already know?

Teacher: I'm not sure. But I will bet that they do well on the assessment.

School improvement efforts suggest that reaching agreements on quality are crucial if professional development efforts and administrative or peer feedback are to be effective.

Leader: Did you think about making connections between their background knowledge and the topic at hand? Could it be that some of the students already knew this before the lesson?

Teacher: Sure, but that's what happens in every lesson. Some know it already, some get it, and others need more teaching.

Leader: I think it would be useful to tap into students' background knowledge and then build on that with students.

Teacher: Yeah, maybe. I really liked the summaries they wrote at the end. You didn't get to see that part, but I can show you what they wrote. See . . .

This conversation is not really getting anywhere because the two people have a different understanding of quality, at least in terms of the topic of background knowledge. As a result, the teacher is immune to the feedback being provided and is not likely to change because of the experience. For this reason, we think that quality is really priority one. Reaching agreements on quality provides a baseline from which a meaningful conversation can be had and changes can be addressed.

Now, imagine a school in which agreements about quality have been reached. There have been discussions about evidence-based practices that are likely to impact learning. The instructional leaders and teachers share definitions, allowing much more productive conversations between them. When there are agreements about quality, new initiatives are more likely to be implemented and thrive. When there are agreements about quality, educators (teachers and leaders) are more likely to abandon or deimplement practices that are not working. Leaders lead these instructional conversations and ensure that agreements about quality are the starting place and that teachers are supported in making change.



EXPLORING LEADERSHIP

Kevin Kruse (2013), author of *Great Leaders Have No Rules* (2019), asks a provocative question in his *Forbes* magazine article: What is leadership, anyway? He starts with what leadership is *not*:

- ➔ Leadership has nothing to do with seniority or one's position in the hierarchy of a company.
- ➔ Leadership has nothing to do with titles.
- ➔ Leadership has nothing to do with personal attributes.
- ➔ Leadership isn't management.

Instead, Kruse (2013) suggests that "leadership is a process of social influence, which maximizes the efforts of others, toward the achievement of a goal." Furthermore, he provides several key elements of this definition:

- ➔ Leadership stems from *social* influence, not authority or power.
- ➔ Leadership requires others, and that implies they don't need to be "direct reports."
- ➔ Leadership does not require certain attributes or even a title; there are many styles and many paths to effective leadership.
- ➔ It includes *a goal*, not influence with no intended outcome.

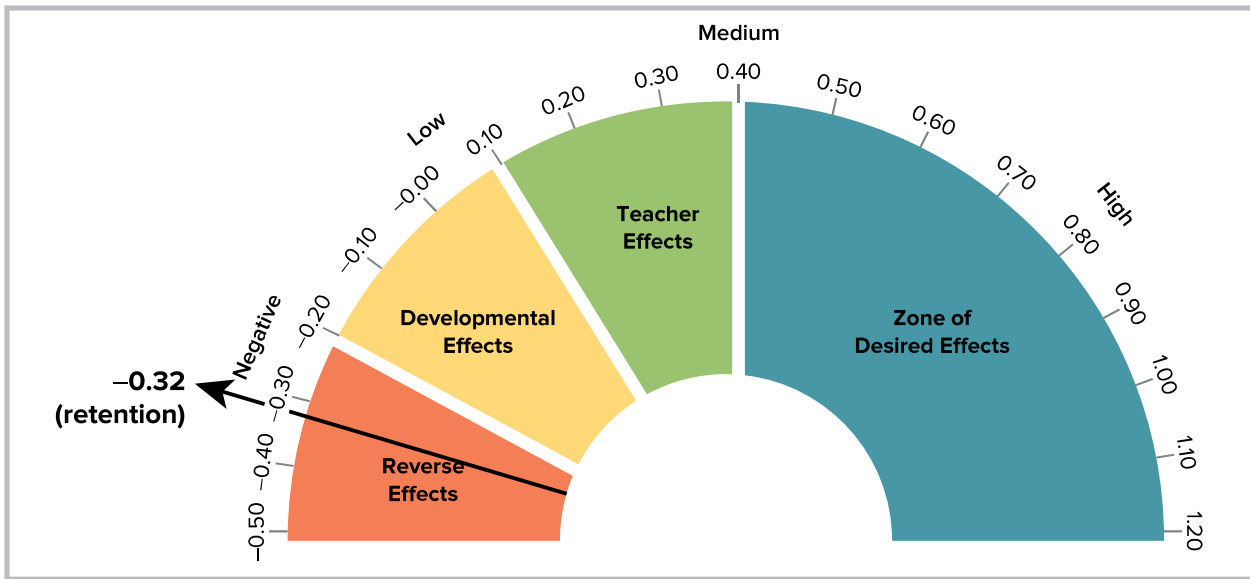
Is that how you see yourself? We hope so. Just think about how great schools would be if every leader exercised their social influence to create change. Just think how great schools would be if leaders were able to maximize the efforts of others. And just think how great schools would be if they worked toward a valued goal. We believe that these are within our reach and that this playbook will help you accomplish this leadership goal.

This playbook focuses on teaching and learning. Of course, there are other aspects of the work that site-based and central office leaders do, ranging from human resources to facilities management to lunch supervision. Although these operational aspects are important, leaders must attend to the instructional program if their schools and districts are going to deliver on the promise of equity and ensure excellence for all. Thus, as indicated by the book's subtitle, it's for people interested in instructional leadership. Moreover, we believe that every leader within the school system should understand the instructional focus and initiatives designed to support learning.

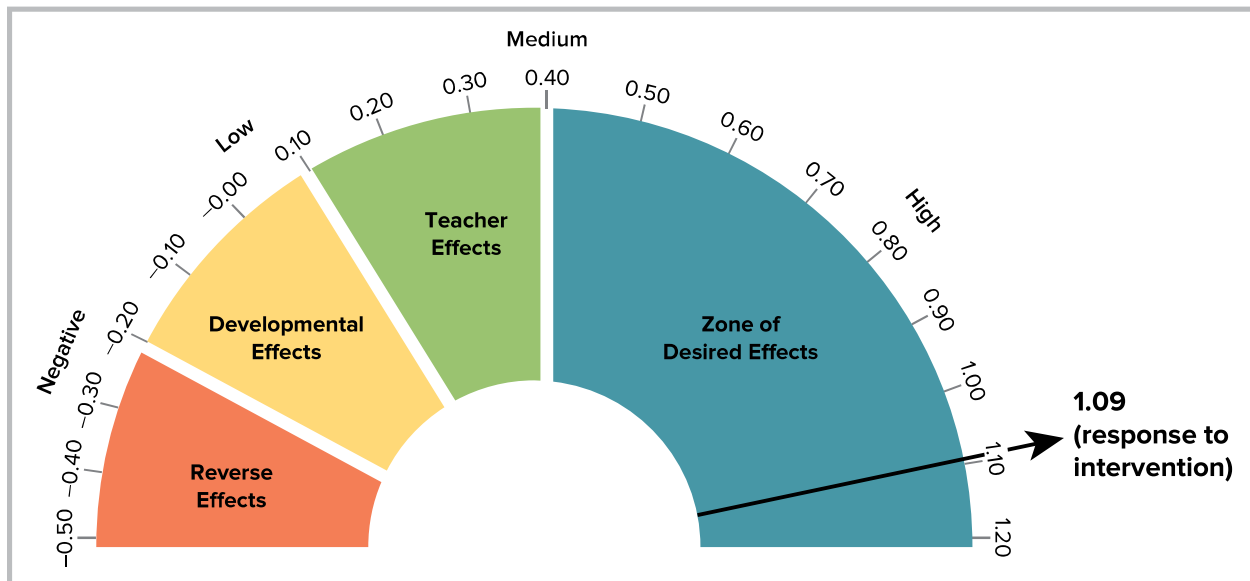
You will notice that we often include effect sizes to support our recommendations. To do so, we draw on the research by John Hattie. He has assembled the largest collection of meta-analyses about education—the Visible Learning® research collection. Through Corwin, he has made this research available at www.visiblelearningmetax.com to the public. A meta-analysis is a systematic review of research on a given topic. Using a statistical tool and reviewing the various studies, an effect size can be generated. This number tells us how powerful a given influence is in ensuring learning. Actions that we take with low effect sizes are not likely to ensure a lot of learning, whereas actions with higher effect sizes are more likely to ensure learning occurs.

The average of all the influences on learning collected to date is 0.40. Thus, anything above 0.40 is an above-average influence, and anything below 0.40 is below the average. That's not to say that we stop doing everything below 0.40. For example, counseling services have an effect size of 0.33, which is slightly below average in terms of impact on learning. However, you probably recognize that there are other reasons for providing counseling services. Whole school improvement efforts also have an effect size of 0.33, again slightly below the average. Does that mean we give up on whole school change, or do we recognize that many of our efforts to improve learning are not fully implemented? In fact, the last section of this book focuses on leading change, as well as implementation and de-implementation efforts. If we all get really good at this, the effect size for whole school improvement efforts should increase.

Let's take a look at two different effect sizes that involve leaders and our influence on decisions. The first is grade-level retention, which is failing and repeating a grade. We can see that the effect size on the barometer is *minus* 0.32. Note that it is in the reverse area, meaning that students actually learn less when they are retained. Although this is a team decision, leadership matters.



What might be the impact of providing quality intervention services rather than retaining a student? The barometer below holds the answer: an effect size of 1.09. Note that it falls well into the zone of desired effects. Armed with this information, leaders work to establish and maintain strong intervention efforts and work to avoid grade-level retention.



Importantly, Visible Learning is more than a list of effect sizes. Having analyzed the ways in which learning is impacted, Hattie has developed mindframes, or dispositions, that are based on the evidence collected. Mindframes describe the way we make decisions. There are mindframes for parents, students, teachers, and leaders. In Module 1, we explore the leader mindframes. Following this investigation, **Part I focuses on leading teaching**. A few teaching practices are discussed, such as teacher clarity

and student engagement in learning, as well as the need to support teachers in delivering quality instructional experiences. Having said that, it's important that we do not spend all our time focused on teaching. We need to attend to the *impact* of that teaching: the learning. However, some approaches to teaching are much more likely than others to ensure that students gain a year's worth of learning for the year that they are in school, for example, using learning intentions and success criteria. You'll notice we model this practice at the start of each module in this book. As we will discuss in Module 9, both practices are well above average in terms of their impact on learning. Thus, we conclude Part I with tools to document the impact that teachers and teaching have on learners and learning.

In Part II, we focus on leading learning. In this section, we explore school culture, professional learning communities as a pathway to building collective teacher efficacy, and the value of feedback from teachers to students, from students to teachers, from teachers to leaders, and from leaders to teachers.

In Part III, we focus on applying the principles of change, conducting an initiative inventory, and focusing on implementation of initiatives, as well as the ways in which we can de-implement things that are not working.

Importantly, each module will reference the related mindframes as we build on the content discussed in the preceding modules.

Remember Kruse's definition that "leadership is a process of social influence, which maximizes the efforts of others, toward the achievement of a goal"? Your social influence can be powerful. With that comes great responsibility, and it requires that you understand the

- ➔ Evidence behind the initiatives you recommend
- ➔ Ways in which change occurs
- ➔ Goals you want to accomplish
- ➔ Impact you want to have
- ➔ Actions you are willing to take to support your team

We believe that veteran school leaders can deepen their knowledge and refine their leadership skills by engaging in the exercises and content in this playbook. Furthermore, we recommend that new and aspiring instructional leaders interact with this content to guide and frame priorities and practices that will result in greater impact on instruction. Finally, we see an important role for central office leaders in this work. Each of the modules can be used to support the learning of all staff engaged in instructional leadership. Therefore, administrators in professional development, school improvement, federal programs, curriculum and instruction, and principal supervision can enrich and expand their capacities to strengthen instructional leadership throughout the district by using this book.

And just like mathematics, art, reading, yoga, or most anything else, we can all learn to be great leaders. We are lucky to have you leading the work.