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Leadership for School Improvement

Getting Started

Leadership is an influential lever for change. (McDougall, Saunders, & Goldenberg, 2007, p. 83)

Schools that make a difference in students' learning are led by principals who make a significant and measurable contribution to the effectiveness of staff and in the learning of pupils in their charge. (Hallinger & Heck, 1998, p. 158)

L ater chapters explore in considerable detail how principals lead schools where student success is the norm. In this introductory chapter, we take a larger view, setting the groundwork for the balance of the book. We underscore the importance of leadership in the school improvement equation. We also develop the scaffolding for how to view and practice school improvement leadership. We begin with a few notes about how we put this volume together.

BUILDING THE BOOK

This book can best be described as an integrative review or a narrative synthesis—an interpretation of the literature (Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008), a method that is especially useful when combing qualitative and quantitative research findings (Rodgers et al., 2009). We follow guidance from Hallinger (2013a, 2013b) in explaining the construction of the volume. The goal is to explore the broadest landscape possible to distill knowledge and understanding on the one hand and provide usable material on the other, all in the service of strengthening school culture to forge more successful schools. In the words of Battistich, Solomon, Watson, and Schaps (1997, p. 150), the aim is "to develop integrative explanatory concepts that provide people with a useful framework for considering action under particular circumstances." The topic at hand is explicit: leaders improving schools by strengthening school culture. Specifically, we explain how principal leadership makes a difference, exposing the pathways through which impacts materialize. This necessitates the development of the various models placed throughout the book, beginning with the overarching framework provided in this chapter. We are quite transparent in our commitment to build on the legacy of scholars who have worked these fields over the last three decades. We build not only from their empirical findings, but also on analyses of the strengths and weaknesses of the field of school improvement leadership.

In order to be as comprehensive as possible, we proceeded in our work as follows. To provide grounding, we examined some of the classic literature on leadership in general. We then moved into the education literature. We compiled hard copies of everything we could turn up on effective school leadership and school improvement through the various search engines from 1975 to 2011. Using Hallinger's (2013b, p. 14) language, we conducted an "exhaustive review." We separated the resulting bounty into four groups: empirical studies (quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods), major reviews of empirical research, robust theoretical and conceptual work, and all others. We concentrated our efforts on the first two categories, although we did read a good number of pieces from the theoretical domain as well. As we read, we identified and secured studies that had eluded us in our initial search. We read extensively (see reference list) until we had almost complete redundancy of information and nuances of interpretation had largely vanished.

Based on 35 years of work on school improvement leadership, we developed an abbreviated outline of what is known in the area. We coded each piece of writing using our outline. We also developed a fairly hefty stack of "memo notes" to ourselves as we read, based on the outline codes. After recopying all the articles and books, we then cut codes and placed each code on a separate sheet of paper with the following information: the coded sentences, the code, names of author(s), date of publication, and page number. The process produced about 25,000 pieces of information. We then compiled like codes together.

Following the canons of qualitative data analysis, we then grouped and regrouped items within categories into coherent sets as patterns and themes emerged. In this way, we believe, we have been able to enrich the narrative on leaders building productive cultures in schools.

The audience for this work is fourfold. We believe that there are critical insights for policy makers at all levels of the educational enterprise. Developers will, we believe, find the conceptual designs and specific findings helpful as they create products and programs for colleagues in schools. In a similar manner, many of the ideas herein lend themselves to fairly direct application by practitioners, especially principals. Finally, it is our hope that researchers will find this integrative body of knowledge quite useful in shaping future explorations of school improvement leadership.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT LEADERSHIP MATTERS

Leadership is often regarded as the single most critical factor in the success or failure of institutions. (Bass, 1990, p. 8)

Leadership seems complicit in excellence. (Supovitz & Klein, 2003, p. 36)

The Core Ideas

We define school improvement leadership as an influence process through which leaders identify a direction for the school, motivate staff, and coordinate an evolving set of strategies toward improvements in teaching and learning. (Heck & Hallinger, 2009, p. 622)

School Improvement

School improvement describes a set of processes, managed from within the school, targeted both at pupil achievement and the school's ability to manage change—a simultaneous focus on process and outcomes. (Potter, Reynolds, & Chapman, 2002, p. 244)

As with most constructs, it is instructive to begin with a definition of school improvement leadership. We know that school improvement is often implicitly defined in the literature (Gray et al., 1999). Precise definitions are often missing. Borrowing from Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, and Easton (2010) and Gray and colleagues (1999), we define school improvement as an increase in effectiveness over time, with effectiveness centered around organizational capacity and the impacts of the deployment of that capacity, especially on student learning. Thus we anchor school improvement in measures of growth or value added (Heck & Hallinger, n.d.; Jackson, 2000). Of course, this leaves the metrics yet to be established, that is, the growth measures and the amount of progress required to be called

"improving." As we report throughout the book, there is considerable variation in the answers to these issues in the literature.

Leadership

We define school leadership as the identification, acquisition, allocation, coordination, and use of the human, social, and material resources necessary to establish the conditions for the possibility of innovation. (Spillane, Diamond, Walker, Halverson, & Jita, 2001, p. 919)

This book is devoted to educational leadership or, more specifically, what we have referred to over the years as instructional leadership, learning centered leadership, and school improvement leadership. Before we drill down on these ideas, however, it is helpful to start with an understanding of the broader concept at hand, i.e., leadership in general. The essence of leadership is (1) having a sense of where an organization needs to get to, or what it needs to achieve, and (2) creating the capacity and deploying that capacity to reach desired ends. It is about the process of influencing others, influence exercised through relationships (DuBrin, 2004; Howell & Costley, 2006; Yukl, 2010).

Educational leadership is simply the application of these core ideas to schooling: "actions intentionally geared to influence the school's primary processes and, therefore, ultimately students' achievement levels" (Witziers, Bosker, & Krüger, 2003, p. 403). It is this broad definition (Leithwood & Duke, 1999; Murphy, 1988) that is ribboned throughout this volume, one that takes an extensive view of the primary processes of schools.

We are abundantly clear throughout the book that leadership is not synonymous with roles (Heller & Firestone, 1995; Ogawa & Bossert, 1995; Pounder, Ogawa, & Adams, 1995). However, because school administrators are foundational for leadership, our focus herein is on how those in formal administrative roles in schools, especially principals, exercise leadership.

Importance

There is increasing evidence that leadership makes a difference in schools. (Louis, Dretzke, & Wahlstrom, 2010, p. 315)

Higher teacher perceptions of principal instructional leadership behaviors relate to higher student achievement. (O'Donnell & White, 2005, p. 61)

School leadership sits in the first position. It acts as a driver for improvement in other organizational subsystems. (Bryk et al., 2010, p. 197)

Across time, it has generally been assumed that good leadership is an important force in developing good schools, while poor leadership hinders improvement. It has only been in the last 40 years, however, that this assumption has been affirmed, beginning with the initial effective schools and instructional leadership studies (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982, Edmonds, 1979; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Murphy, Hallinger, & Mesa, 1985b) and continuing through the increasingly sophisticated studies of the last two decades by scholars such as Hallinger, Bickman, and Davis (1996), Louis et al. (2010), and Robinson (2008).

Analysts have also been active in documenting the magnitude of that importance, providing concreteness to the influence of leadership as a driver of school improvement (Gray et al., 1999; Southworth, 2002). Researchers provide this information from quantitative studies in a variety of ways, most of which are not intuitively clear to practitioners, developers, and policy makers. They employ correlations, effect sizes, months of growth, variance explained, and so forth.

An essential point to remember is that most children's "learning" is accounted for by nonschool factors such as family conditions and student aptitude (Berends, Lucas, Sullivan, & Briggs, 2005; Lee & Burkam, 2002; Rothstein, 2004). Schooling is responsible for something in the neighborhood of 20 percent of student achievement (Creemers & Reezigt, 1996; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000a; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). So one needs to see whether "effects" are of all student learning ("overall effects") or the part of learning attributable to schools ("school effects"). For example, if leadership explains 25 percent of "school effects," that is 5 percent of overall variance, a finding consistent with the best work to date (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006).

One also needs to be aware if researchers are measuring direct effects of leadership or all effects (i.e., direct effects and mediated or indirect effects). Since, as we will see, most of the impact of principals occurs through their influence on school culture and the instructional program, measures of direct effects are almost always quite low, while assessments that include indirect effects are more robust (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Witziers et al., 2003).

On occasion, studies report influence in terms that are more familiar to practitioners. For example, Branch, Rivkin, and Hanushek (2003) use months of student learning as the metric, finding that effective leaders raise achievement levels for students between 2 and 7 months each year, while their ineffective counterparts lower achievement by those amounts. Bryk and colleagues (2010) reach a parallel conclusion using growth versus stagnation, as does the Center for Teaching Quality (2007) using growth expectations.

Collectively, through the use of different procedures and tools and employing different metrics, research affirms leadership as an essential variable in the overall equation of student success, i.e., one that includes environmental conditions outside of schooling. That influence is amplified

when the "school effects" only algorithm is examined and both direct and indirect pathways of influence are included. The summative message is that leadership can and does have significant and meaningful effects on student learning.

We also know that leadership takes on added significance in certain places and in particular times. On the "times" front, we know that leadership becomes more essential when the environment surrounding an institution is roiling (Bass, 1990; Murphy & Meyers, 2008). In difficult times, the value and influence of leaders increases as well (Tichy & Cardwell, 2004; Zaccaro, Kemp, & Bader, 2004). So too in times of change, especially fundamental change (Valentine & Prater, 2011) and on the occasions when the pathway to the future is less than clear (Fullan & Ballew, 2002). On the "place" front, leadership is more critical in schools with high concentrations of students placed at risk (Cotton, 2003), in low performing schools (Ikemoto, Taliaferro, & Adams, 2012), in low-SES schools (Cotton, 2003), and in all challenged schools (Heck & Hallinger, n.d.).

Impact

Leadership has very significant effects on the quality of the school organization and on pupil learning. (Leithwood, Day, et al., 2006, p. 10)

Student achievement is consistently higher in schools where principals are perceived to have more competence than schools led by principals perceived as less competent. (Valentine & Prater, 2011, p. 13)

Studies over the last 35 years have connected leadership with the effectiveness of most of the major dimensions of education and every important outcome of schooling. On the conditions, variables, elements, or dimensions side of the ledger, there is empirical evidence that effective principals have positive impacts on

- use of technology in schools (Anderson & Dexter, 2005)
- use of data (Kerr, Marsh, Ikemoto, Darilek, & Barney, 2006; Lachat & Smith, 2005; Wayman & Stringfield, 2006)
- instructional practice (Camburn , Rowan, & Taylor, 2003; Correnti & Rowan, 2007; Wellisch, MacQueen, Carriere, & Duck, 1978)
- parental/community-school linkages (Bryk et al., 2010; Teddlie & Stringfield, 1985)
- staff collaboration (Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, & Ouston, 1979; Wayman & Stringfield, 2006)

- professional development and organizational learning (Gall, Fielding, Schalock, Charters, & Wilczynski, 1985; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Youngs & King, 2002)
- professional community (Scribner, Cockrell, Cockrell, & Valentine, 1999; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012)
- staff commitment, trust, motivation, work orientation, job satisfaction, confidence, and accountability (Dannetta, 2002; Gurr, Drysdale, & Mulford, 2005; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005)
- implementation of reform (Desimone, 2002; Murphy & Datnow, 2003b; Useem, Christman, Gold, & Simon,1997)
- program coherence (Murphy, 1992; Newmann, Smith, Allensworth, & Bryk, 2001; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012)
- learning climate for students (Brookover et al., 1978; Crum & Sherman, 2008; Heck & Hallinger, 2009), including safety and order (Lasley & Wayson, 1982; Rutter et al., 1979; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012)
- academic programs within schools, including special education (Sindelar, Shearer, Yendol-Hoppey, Liebert, 2006), vocational education (Woloszyk, 1996), and bilingual education (Carter & Maestas, 1982; Scanlan & Lopez, 2012)

On the outcome side of the ledger, effective principal leadership has been shown to influence

- student engagement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000a)
- sustainable change (Eilers & Camacho, 2007; Hamilton, Stecher, Russell, Marsh, & Miles, 2008; Murphy, Hallinger, & Mesa, 1985a; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008)
- effective schools (Clark, Lotto, & McCarthy, 1980; Hulpia, Devos, & Rosseel, 2009)
- school improvement (Heck & Hallinger, 2010; Leithwood, Jantzi, & McElheron-Hopkins, 2006; May & Supovitz, 2011; Murphy & Datnow, 2003b)
- implementation of large scale reform (Desimone, 2002; Shear et al., 2008; Useem et al., 1997)
- student learning (Bell, Bolam, & Cubillo, 2003; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Robinson et al., 2008; Waters et al., 2003).

The obverse to these storylines is also true, however. Ineffective leadership can negatively impact school conditions and outcomes (Bryk et al., 2010; Robinson et al., 2008). Relatedly, leader stability has a role here as well. Leadership continuity is important (Desimone, 2002; Tichy & Cardwell, 2004) and churn in the principalship often has deleterious effects

on the ingredients of quality schooling and the outcomes linked to those conditions (Heck & Hallinger, 2009; Stringfield & Reynolds, 2012).

Cautionary Notes

Before we move deeply into our exploration of school improvement leadership, a few introductory notes are in order. To begin with, we need to heed the reminder from Leithwood and Montgomery (1982, p. 336) that "effectiveness is a continuous rather than bipolar condition." While our attention is riveted on leadership, it is important to remember that it is an essential but insufficient element in fostering healthy cultures and explaining school improvement (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; McDougall et al., 2007; Sweetland & Hoy, 2000) and that the ability to attribute "cause" remains problematic (Crosnoe, 2011). Within the "people" domain specifically, there is abundant evidence that others play critical parts (Levin & Datnow, 2012). We need also remind ourselves that conclusions about the importance of leadership are not completely uniform (Brewer, 1993; Grissom & Loeb, 2011; May & Supovitz, 2011) and are consistently richer and more robust in qualitative than in quantitative studies (Robinson et al., 2008). As we will see momentarily, research that includes both direct and indirect impacts is always more sanguine about the effects of leadership than the one that includes only direct effects (Hallinger & Heck, 1996, 1998). In addition, the significance of context is ignored at peril (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986, 1987a, 1987b). We also must acknowledge that the job is larger than leadership for school improvement (Leithwood, Jantzi, & McElheron-Hopkins, 2006). We close with one last caution. The work of principals is difficult by nature (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2002). It is much easier to write about the leadership game than it is to practice leadership.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT LEADERSHIP

> Principal leadership effects [are] reciprocal rather than unidirectional. (Hallinger & Heck, 1996, p. 32)

The framework for our work is contained in Figure 1.1 (see page 16). In order to push toward "the elusive goal of clarifying the link between leadership and learning" (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008, p. 459), we partition the narrative into segments. We open with a description of the antecedents that exercise purchase on leadership. We include here demographic conditions, knowledge and skills, values and beliefs, and traits and characteristics. Next, we explore school contextual variables that shape leadership practice. We then turn to leadership behaviors inside the domains of effective schools. Here we foreground material contained in the remaining chapters of the book. An analysis of the pathways of leader influence on the workings of the school closes our discussion of the framework.

To complete our assignment, it is necessary to compartmentalize findings. To some extent, this is artificial. School improvement is complex and messy. It is difficult at times to slice it into components. Ideas and findings crisscross the narrative and are interwoven across sections of the story (Southworth, 2002; Vescio et al., 2008). What is true for school improvement holds for leadership for school improvement as well. Additionally, the work we present represents the normal pathway to success. However, we must remember that there is no universal chronicle that is applicable at all times and in all situations (Heck & Marcoulides, 1996; Southworth, 2002). Also, for reasons detailed earlier, our attention in the model is devoted almost exclusively to variables linked to student learning. That is, ours is a constrained model. This focus is not intended to gainsay the importance of other elements of school leadership. Recall also that ours is a hinged or reciprocal model. That is, the principal both is directed by antecedents, environmental and school contexts, and school conditions and outcomes and influences these factors (Hallinger et al., 1996; Pitner, 1988). The model is multilevel and dynamic, not static (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Heck & Hallinger, n.d.), a fact that can be forgotten when it is pulled apart for analysis.

Antecedents

Leadership is best predicted by an amalgamation of attributes reflecting cognitive capacities, personality orientation, motives and values, social appraisal skills, problem-solving competencies, and general and domain-specific expertise. (Zaccaro et al., 2004, p. 120)

Personal characteristics influence how principals enact their role. These antecedent variables include gender, prior teaching experience, and values and beliefs. (Hallinger & Heck, 1996, p. 21)

The most sophisticated and theoretically sound models of instructional leadership include a set of personal factors that shape the actions of principals (see Hallinger & Heck, 1996, 1998; Murphy, Elliott, Goldring, & Porter, 2007) and, in turn, are molded by those actions. While there is overlap within and across antecedent categories, they do provide a useful heuristic for understanding how personal conditions shape school improvement leadership (Boyan, 1988). Building on our earlier work in this area (see Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; Murphy et al., 2007), we propose four broad bundles of antecedents, or what Barnett and McCormick (2004, p. 410) refer to as "internal processes": demographic characteristics, knowledge and skills, values and beliefs, and traits.

The *demographic antecedents* of leadership behavior include gender, age, education, and experience. Research confirms connections for gender (Hallinger et al., 1996; Valentine & Prater, 2011), especially for instructionally

centered actions (Cotton, 2003; Hallinger et al., 1996); education (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Valentine & Prater, 2011); and prior teaching experience (Hallinger et al., 1996). Linkages between age, or stage of development, and administrative experience have yet to be established (Valentine & Prater, 2011).

In terms of *knowledge and skills,* there is research evidence that the intellectual or cognitive capacities of principals have sway on behavior, which in turn impacts school effectiveness (Dinham, 2005; Leithwood, Day, et al., 2006; Mangin, 2007). "General and domain specific expertise" (Zaccaro et al., 2004, p. 120) are influential as well (Friedkin & Slater, 1994; Leithwood, Day, et al., 2006). Relatedly, social-emotional capacities of principals shape actions and sequel to those behaviors (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2002; Fullan & Ballew, 2002). Important elements here include: tolerance for ambiguity (Valentine & Prater, 2011); self awareness, especially of one's emotions (Fullan & Ballew, 2002); self-efficacy (Leithwood, Jantzi, & McElheron-Hopkins, 2006; Wells, Widmer, & McCoy, 2004); interpersonal skills such as empathy and social appraisal skills (Fullan & Ballew, 2002; Leithwood, Jantzi, & McElheron-Hopkins, 2006); and coping skills (Louis & Miles, 1991). There is also some suggestion that intellectual acumen and social-emotional intelligence together exercise powerful effects on the behavior of leaders (Fullan & Ballew, 2002).

While there is more overlap here than was the case with the demographic and knowledge antecedents, linkages between *values* (and beliefs and dispositions) are also more robust. To begin, there is a sizable body of evidence that "values and beliefs inform the principal's decisions and actions" (Silins & Mulford, 2010, p. 74) and impact school success (Gurr, Drysdale, & Mulford, 2006; Riester, Pursch, & Skria, 2002). While it is foolhardy to attempt to compile a complete list of all the values that mold leader behavior, some dispositions rise to the level of high visibility and importance. That is, there are value-behavior linkages that influence school success (Dumay, 2009; Leithwood, Day, et al., 2006). One is a ferocious belief in the educability of children and the prime mission of ensuring their success (Leithwood, Day, et al., 2006; Riester et al., 2002). A second is a disposition toward equity and justice (Dinham, 2005; Roney, Coleman, & Schlichting, 2007). A third is the belief in the power of the community of stakeholders to arrive at decisions that are best for students (Leithwood, Day, et al., 2006), a disposition toward collaboration (Newmann, King, & Youngs, 2000).

Research on *traits* and their linkages to leader behavior and subsequent organizational performance has enjoyed a checkered history (Judge, Bono, Ilies, Gerhardt, 2002; Zaccaro et al., 2004). Originally, they held center stage in explanations of leader effects. They were then pushed off the stage altogether only to claw their way partially back into the spotlight in the last few years. Traits are best thought of "as relatively stable and coherent integrations of personal characteristics that foster a consistent pattern of leadership performance across a variety of group and organizational

situations" (Zaccaro et al., 2004. p. 104). The most accurate conclusion we can draw is that traits do mold behavior (Blase & Blase, 1999; Gurr et al., 2006; Zaccaro et al., 2004). The fact that other antecedents and context variables also matter hardly diminishes the "personological" basis of leadership (Judge et al., 2002, p. 775). As was the case with beliefs, containers for characteristics can seem bottomless. They do cohere, however, into a handful of "common and consistent" elements (Gurr et al. 2005, p. 548): passion, optimism, persistence, authenticity, and a penchant for hard work (high energy).

Passion means that principals are proactive (Day, 2005; Leithwood, Jantzi, & McElheron-Hopkins, 2006). They have a bias toward action, risk taking, and innovation (Barnett & McCormick, 2004; Crum & Sherman, 2008; Dinham, 2005). A results orientation is also part of proactiveness (Sweeney, 1982) as is a personal dedication to obtaining those ends (Supovitz & Poglinco, 2001) and a penchant for inspiring others to do likewise (Gurr et al., 2005). Passion includes courage, especially to make difficult and unpopular decisions (Dinham, 2005). Passionate leaders are comfortable pushing back the boundaries that limit goal achievement (Day, 2005; Sather, 1999; Southworth, 2002).

Faith and optimism often move leaders to action (Leithwood, 2005; Southworth, 2002). This includes a predilection for positive thinking (Dinham, 2005), especially in times of uncertainty (Blase & Kirby, 2009; Goldenberg, 2004). Leader optimism produces behaviors that help others gain and maintain positive perspectives (Blase & Kirby, 2009). Optimistic leaders help people see the connections between their work and the success of students (Bryk et al., 2010; Southworth, 2002); they spread a "sense of possibility" (Dinham, 2005).

Successful school leaders are often quite persistent (Dinham, 2005; Gurr et al., 2005; Leithwood, Jantzi, & McElheron-Hopkins, 2006). They translate that sense of tenacity into actions that push, pull, and carry their colleagues to higher levels of effectiveness (Riester et al., 2002). They are "determined individuals" (Southworth, 2002, p. 82) in the pursuit of goals (Dinham, 2005).

Strong leaders are often defined as authentic, a characteristic that covers a good deal of ground. It includes what researchers describe as openness to others (Dumay, 2009; Judge et al., 2002; Zaccaro et al., 2004). Embedded here also are feelings of empathy and concern for others (Gurr et al., 2006) as well as a sense of conscientiousness, which includes dependability and consideration (Blase & Kirby, 2009; Judge et al., 2002). Authenticity suggests a stance of nonguardedness and trustworthiness (Dinham, 2005; Dumay, 2009; Judge et al., 2002). Gurr and associates (2006, p. 375) refer to it as "other centeredness," commitments to inclusiveness (Hayes, Christie, Mills, & Lingard, 2004), honesty (Blase & Kirby, 2009), and accessibility (Dinham, 2005; Southworth, 2002).

Many productive leaders are high-energy people, with powerful work ethics (Leithwood, Day, et al., 2006), what Southworth (2002, p. 82) describes as "an emblem that the leader is devoted to the school." This energy fuels actions that promote organizational health and student learning (Eilers & Camacho, 2007).

Context

The relation between principal and school effectiveness will be best understood through the use of models that account for effects of the school context on principal's leadership. (Hallinger et al., 1996, p. 544)

Instructional management appears to be influenced by environmental characteristics. (Leitner, 1994, p. 233)

Researchers over the last few decades have solidified an essential law of school improvement: Leadership for school improvement is shaped by the contexts in which schools and the leaders of those institutions find themselves (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987b, 2013; Murphy, Hallinger, Weil, & Mitman, 1984): "Leadership practice is situated in a multifaceted context, including particular students and families, teachers, and administrators; district, state, and federal policy; and local and national professional organizations. These multiple facets all come together and interact in complex ways to help define leadership practice" (Coldren & Spillane, 2007, p. 387).

Context includes conditions of the larger environment around a school (e.g., type of community, geographical location) as well as characteristics of the school itself (e.g., ages of students served, or grade levels included) (Moller & Eggen, 2005). We know that similar leadership behaviors can have different effects in different settings (Hallinger et al., 1996; Judge et al., 2002). We also learn that varied contexts often call for different leadership behaviors (Bryman, 2004; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986).

External factors that influence leadership include federal and state policies, laws, and regulations; district policies, procedures, and norms; and community conditions (Levin & Datnow, 2012; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Morrissey, 2000), such as racial and ethnic composition and income and wealth (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). School conditions can also make leadership work either easier or more challenging. We know, for example, that school SES is linked to principal leadership (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987b; Leitner, 1994). So too is the robustness of parental involvement (Hallinger et al., 1996). Level of schooling, whether elementary or secondary, influences school leadership (Firestone & Herriott, 1982; Mazzarella, 1985; Murphy, Hallinger, Lotto, & Miller, 1987). Because of their

complexity (Firestone & Herriott, 1982; Louis & Miles, 1991; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012) and because they are notoriously difficult venues in which to introduce change (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001), indirect leadership is more prevalent in secondary schools (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987b; Heck & Marcoulides, 1996; Witziers et al., 2003). Secondary schools also often require more attention to the administrative dimensions of schooling and less to instructional activities (Brewer, 1993; Robinson et al., 2008). School size is meaningful to leadership as well, with large size influencing behavior in ways similar to secondary schools (May & Supovitz, 2011). School status also pulls leaders in particular directions at times. That is, whether a school is failing, satisfactory, or highly successful is consequential for leadership (Murphy, 2008a, 2008b).

We leave our discussion of context with some key reminders. It is important to reinforce the point that while context is important in helping establish patterns of leadership, it is hardly determinate. Principals can shape environmental conditions as well as be influenced by them. External context can also be amplified or muted by conditions of schooling (Valentine & Prater, 2011; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). The elements of context are interactive (Eilers & Camacho, 2007), not independent and static.

The School Improvement Leadership Engine

There [are] marked differences in leadership in effective and ineffective schools. (Sweeney, 1982, p. 348)

The mechanisms through which principals influence students are complex and defy simple categorization. (Brewer, 1993, p. 281)

In the balance of the book, we explore the core of the model in Figure 1.1 (see page 16), what we think of as the engine of school improvement leadership. Our objective in this introductory chapter is simply to provide an overview of forthcoming analyses. As we will see, paradoxically our engine is surprisingly simple yet complex. Each element carries depth and nuance that belie simple labels. Most of the concepts are not mutually exclusive; there is a fair amount of overlap between and among them. Variables wrap around each other and mix together. At times, ingredients fall under the spotlight. At other times, they are backstage. Varied proportions and different weights hold at different times and places. Variables can be combined in various ways to fuel school improvement. The relationships among the pieces are complex. There is no single storyline. What we end up with looks a good deal like a stew. Our work is in many ways similar to disentangling thickets. While this labor is essential, it is messy and at times less satisfactory than we might wish.

Tasks

Activities

Our colleague Philip Hallinger and we have held for the past 30 years that leadership needs to be defined, eventually, in terms of observable and consequential practices. For us, then, school improvement leadership is the enactment of behaviorally anchored processes in the core dimensions of improving and effective schools (e.g., monitoring instruction, building linkages with parents, establishing growth targets for students). It is always a cocktail of functions and processes, of content and ways.

Since the inception of the effective schools movement in the late 1970s and early 1980s, analysts have provided a multitude of frameworks to capture school improvement leadership. In one of the earliest, based on their California study of effective schools, Hallinger and Murphy (1985) featured the following domains (framing school goals and objectives, developing and promoting expectations, developing and promoting standards, assessing and monitoring student performance, protecting instructional time, knowledge of curriculum and instruction, promoting curricular coordination, promoting and supporting instructional improvement, supervision and evaluation of instruction, and creating productive work environment) and processes (communication, conflict resolution, group processes, decision making, and change processes). Around the same time, Sweeney (1982) culled out six core bundles of actions that define school improvement leadership: highlight student achievement, establish common instructional strategies, foster a safe and orderly environment, monitor student progress, coordinate the instructional program, and nurture and support teachers. In 1985, we consolidated all available work at that time into the framework in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1   Dimensions of Instructional Management

Defines the Mission	Manages Instructional Program	Promotes School Culture
Framing school goals Communicating school goals	Supervising instruction	Supportive learning communities for students
	Coordinating curriculum	Communities of professional practice for teachers
	Monitoring student progress	Communities of engagement for parents

Leithwood, alone and with a variety of colleagues, has been extremely influential in crafting broad frameworks of leadership for school improvement. Perhaps his best known model features setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program (Leithwood, Patten, & Jantzi, 2010). Another framework includes goals, culture, participatory decision making, and connections to parents and communities, along with the practices to bring these ingredients to life in schools (Leithwood et al., 2004).

Other scholars highlight the role of the principal as developer of capital in their portraits of leadership (Fullan & Ballew, 2002). Spillane, Diamond, Walker, Halverson, & Jita (2001) focus on human, social, and physical capital. Smerdon and Borman (2009) underscore human, material, and social capital. From our analyses of capital perspectives, we suggest that leadership for school improvement is best understood in terms of six types of capital: human, production, resource, cultural, social, and integrative.

Other designs have been employed as well. For example, May and Supovitz (2011) partition school improvement leadership into practices, styles, and processes. In her review, Cotton (2003) outlines overarching domains of principal work (with embedded practices): a clear focus on student learning interactions and relationships, culture, instruction, and accountability. Bryk and colleagues (2010) define leadership anchored to school improvement as the ability to positively impact instructional guidance, professional capacity, school community connections, and a student-focused environment.

In one model, Hallinger and Heck (1998) unpack leadership behaviors into four essential domains: purpose and goals, organizational structure and social networks, people, and organizational culture. In another, they describe five roles: being a catalyst for change, maintaining an improvement focus, fostering the leadership of others, supporting instructional effectiveness, and providing tangible support for youngsters and teachers (1996). Supovitz, Sirinides, and May (2010) wrestle behaviors into three pens: focusing mission and goals, encouraging a climate of collaboration and trust, and supporting instructional improvement. Fullan (2002, p. 2) outlines five "action-and-mind-sets": moral purpose, dynamics of change, emotional intelligence, coherence making, and knowledge.

In our model (see Figure 1.1), we build from these and other empirically anchored frameworks about school improvement leadership over the last 35 years. We employ two domains to capture behaviors: managing the instructional program and creating the culture. Chapters 4 through 8 will carry us deeply into the cultural part of the model. The domains or "dimensions" provide the foreground for those chapters. The "processes" are threaded into those dimensions, visible but not always in the spotlight. For this reason, it is useful to say a few words about the processes before we proceed. One can identify a great assortment of processes (e.g., communicating) that give meaning to content (e.g., curriculum) from the

research on leadership for school improvement. Many of these come from studies of leadership and the various lines of analysis on school improvement (e.g., school restructuring, turnaround schools, comprehensive school reform, achievement-gap closing schools). Others are found buried in studies addressing a plethora of other areas of interest (e.g., professional development, programs for English Language Learners, homeless children). We group many of these processes into three bundles: organizational functioning processes, human relations processes, and inspirational processes. Organizational functioning processes include planning, organizing, implementing, coordinating, resourcing, monitoring, boundary spanning and buffering, and assessing. Human relations processes feature problem framing and problem solving, decision making, communication, and conflict resolution. Inspirational processes include modeling, teaching, maintaining visibility, and sensemaking.

Characteristic elements of practices

Before leaving our overview of tasks (the cocktail of content and processes), it is important to introduce what we refer to as the characteristic elements of leadership practices. To begin with, there is the issue of the *quality* of practices, which can be arrayed on a continuum from effective to poor. Practices also vary in *frequency*, from routinely performed to rarely undertaken. *Scope*, a characteristic first empirically surfaced by May and Supovitz (2011), addresses the number (or percent) of people touched by a leader's practice, from one to all. *Intensity* is an important element of practice as well, ranging from high or deep to light. *Range* addresses the coverage of behaviors from few to many. *Integration* refers to the extent to which practices are discrete or tightly bundled.
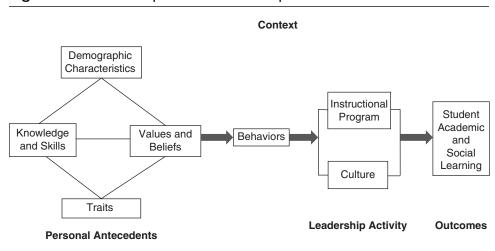
Figure 1.1   School Improvement Leadership Model

Style

Over the last half century, a good deal of ink has been devoted to the topic of leadership style, "the modes by which principals express themselves" (May & Supovitz, 2011, p. 335). Early analyses focused on whether principals were task oriented or people oriented. Derivations of this work often define style in terms of directiveness, supportiveness, and formality.

Another line of work considers style in terms of power and control. One strand here focuses on whether the principal displays an authoritarian or democratic style of leadership. A second addresses style in terms of whether the principal holds power centrally or distributes it to staff. A third genre of work presents style in terms of the leader's penchant for professional or hierarchical control.

Bolman and Deal (2008) help us see the ways principals express themselves somewhat differently, defining style by the frames that leaders employ—political, structural, symbolic, and human. Still others define style in terms of leader activeness, from highly active to laissez faire. Building on the work of Burns (1978) and other seminal scholars in the area of organizational leadership, Leithwood (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000b, 2005, 2006) introduced the topic of transactional and transformational leadership styles to education. Closely related here are the discussions of charismatic versus noncharismatic styles (Yukl, 2010).

Styles anchored in the nature of work privileged by the leader has been common, at least since the pioneering efforts of Cuban (1988), who highlights political, managerial, and instructional orientations. Style has also been presented in terms of whether the leader features authority-based, morally-based, or personality-based practices. We see a good deal of writing featuring "change" in analyses of style as well, with principals being characterized as either status-quo leaders or change-oriented leaders (proactive, innovative, risk-taking individuals). Finally, the idea of integrative styles has arisen over time (see Marks & Printy, 2003, for an especially good empirical example).

The collective body of scholarship on leadership "style" has been helpful in mapping important dimensions of leadership work, deepening the leadership narrative. On the other hand, evidence on the effectiveness of styles has been both elusive and largely noncumulative. Looking at the full array of work, here is what we can report with some degree of confidence. There is no one-best style for all places and times. Leaders with varying orientations have been identified as effective. Alignment between leader style and context seems worthy of further investigation. There is some sense that leaders of improving schools are often "authoritative" (not authoritarian) and that a laissez faire or passive leadership style is rarely productive and often proves to be quite problematic. Styles that highlight distributed or shared leadership have yet to be linked tightly with improvement (Miller & Rowan, 2006), while those that feature commitment to learning and teaching often are found to characterize principals in improving schools (Murphy, 1990).

Leadership Pathways

> Successful leadership influences teaching and learning both through face-to-face relationships and by structuring the way that teachers work. (Robinson et al., 2008, pp. 659–660)

Earlier we reported that principals' effects on students are largely indirect. Their actions are mediated by the instructional program and the school culture (see Figure 1.1). Here we add that principal effects on these mediating variables can be direct or indirect as well (Ogawa & Bossert, 1995). For example, a principal can visit a classroom and provide feedback to an individual teacher. Or she can meet with a grade-level team to think through some curricular issues. These are direct effects on teachers. Alternatively, principals can do things, which in turn touch teachers or shape school climate. For example, a principal can create time to permit and protocols to guide collaborative work. Or she can require the use of curricular pacing guides. These actions have indirect effects on teachers. Something is situated between the principal and the teacher.

Researchers have also uncovered the mechanisms by which principals operationalize indirect effects on teachers and culture. School structures (e.g., how the day is organized, where teachers are located in the building) provide one influence strategy. Policies provide a second (e.g., all teachers cover both high and low track classes, all special education students must be mainstreamed). Standard operating procedures and norms (ingrained routines, systems, and expectations) offer principals a third indirect avenue of influence (e.g., staff members personally greet each child at the classroom door every class period). Additionally, as Spillane Diamond, Walker, Halverson, and Jita (2001) and Ross, Sterbinsky, and McDonald (2003) remind us, tools and artifacts provide another avenue of impacting teachers and culture indirectly (e.g., meeting protocols, lesson plan formats). Finally, principals exercise indirect leadership by the way they allocate resource. Leadership activity across all five of these pathways shapes the ways teachers conduct their work.

We underscore both direct and indirect pathways in our analyses in Chapters 4 through 8. Both appear to be influential in the process of school improvement, although the use of direct approaches is often constrained by factors such as school size and level (i.e., elementary vs. secondary).

CONCLUSION

In this introductory chapter, we overviewed the full landscape that we will be exploring in the balance of the book. We explained the methods used to gather, compile, and analyze the research. We summarized the

literature documenting the cardinal position of leadership in the chronicle of school improvement. In the second half of the chapter, we presented the model undergirding our work. We unpacked the essential personal factors (antecedents) that help shape leader practice. We also described factors in the schools environment (context) that push and pull leaders to act in certain ways. We closed with a preliminary look at the school improvement leadership engine, the tasks (the processes linked to domains) defining effective leadership, and the pathways (direct and indirect) that practices follow.