

Preface

All school principals are keenly aware that their schedules are fairly unforgiving and accountability expectations are high. There is no “down time” during the day or, for that matter, during the school year. The typical school resonates with a constant buzz of activity. First and foremost is the goal of improving student learning. Every principal wants to know how to use time better to achieve improved instruction rather than just add more to the schedule. Unfortunately, professional development is often viewed as an “add-on,” and the idea of the principal as the professional development leader can be daunting. “I cannot be all things to all people,” lamented a principal recently. Yet it is clear from recent educational research that site-based, job-embedded professional development that becomes an integrated part of the daily work within the school can better serve the learning process of the adults and thus actually improve student learning. This last point is extremely important, especially in providing high-quality teachers for every classroom. There is absolutely no reason to consistently engage in any adult learning at a school if it does not successfully target improving the educational opportunities for students. *The Principal as Professional Development Leader* has been crafted as a book for busy principals and other school leaders that provides insights, models, strategies, skills, and tools to help build the capacity of professional learning within the school in order to close the achievement gap and improve learning for all students. This book offers a road map for the journey.

With the pace of change in schools and society, the need for continuous, high-quality, and aligned professional development is critical. Today’s principal and teachers, faced with demands of students, parents, and the community to provide quality education for all students, must be professionally prepared, not at one point of time, but continually professionally prepared. Without the sound practices of quality professional development understood by the principal, schools cannot effectively change. Professional development means a lifelong, collaborative learning process that nourishes the growth of

individuals, teams, and the school through a daily job-embedded, learner-centered approach. It emerges from and meets the learning needs of participants as well as clearly focuses on improving student learning. Professional development is not something that is done to individuals or faculties on a periodic basis as new mandates or educational fads appear. It is an ongoing renewal process that permeates the professional learning community culture. It becomes a part of the complex nature of a successful school environment.

Given the demands of high expectations and increased accountability, a principal's understanding of professional development is a critical leverage point for sustained change and improved student achievement. It is our intent with this book to help principals understand their role as professional development leaders to enable collaborative sustained learning for teachers and other staff that directly affects student learning. This book simplifies and focuses the work of the principal as professional development leader by providing scenarios, processes, context, and content that principals can use in planning, implementing, and evaluating long-term professional development for their schools. As former school principals, we believe that this book specifically provides principals the tools and the procedures needed to help teachers and staff grow professionally.

With this background, we invite you to an overview of the book. The *Principal's Scenarios* that begin each chapter are intended to ground the reader in the reality of the work. The *Focused Questions* will provoke deeper thought about the chapter topic to focus the reading and learning to the reader's specific context. Research and best practices are provided so that the reader has a clear foundation regarding professional development and examples of what works in schools.

Chapter 1, "What It Means to be a Professional Development Leader," provides an overview of our professional development model as well and the importance of the principal as a professional development leader within the school. The chapter focuses on the roles of the principal as professional development leader and the impact on the school culture. Professional development is viewed as the key lever for creating the change necessary to close the student achievement gap. A model is presented as a lens for understanding the framework of the book, including the principal's role and critical components for high-quality professional development.

Chapter 2, "Builder: Building the Capacity of the Professional Learning Community," specifically provides guidance for understanding the school culture and targeting goals for professional

development. Readers will be able to compare their schools to a research-based, high-quality professional development model using a rubric. Tools are provided to help the reader prepare a long-range professional development plan, including assessing the need, considering data, and understanding individual differences.

Chapter 3, “Designer: Developing Focus, Plans, and Resources,” advances the model to the planning stage and includes critical strategies that can be used as alternatives to the traditional inservice. The National Staff Development Council Standards are introduced. Examples of “inside knowledge” and “outside knowledge” are provided.

Chapter 4, “Implementer: Taking Action,” emphasizes the conditions, supports, and various models, strategies, and tools that can be used by a principal or other school leaders to take the necessary action that will lead to improved professional practices and student achievement. “Implementation” represents all the professional development planning put into action through a systematic process.

Chapter 5, “Reflective Leader: Evaluating Results,” explains the final section of the model and gives credibility to the cycle of inquiry, continuous reflection on practice, and evaluation of progress. Principals are also encouraged to reflect on their own learning.

Chapter 6, “The Principal as Change Agent: The Challenge for the Future,” serves as a summary to the book and a call to action for leadership and learning. A journey map is provided to assist principals and other school leaders in focusing on their own work and the steps to take to integrate high-quality professional development into the daily work and professional learning of the school.

Resources: The final section of the book provides the principal with additional readings, resources, and Web sites as a means of exploring and expanding the possibilities of professional learning.

We invite you to begin, and continue, the principal’s journey as a professional development leader.