



The New York State Board of Regents and
The New York State Education Department

Growing Tomorrow's Leaders Today

Preparing Effective School Leaders in New York State

"The factor that empowers the people and ultimately determines which organizations succeed or fail is the leadership of those organizations."

Warren Bennis

Today's school environments have become more complex and diverse where all children are expected to learn and where high learning standards set the vision of educational success for all students. In a rapidly changing and more technologically oriented society, students will need to acquire the knowledge and skills that will help them achieve success in school and in life. The evolving nature of school environments has placed new demands on educational leaders. Where knowledge of school management, finance, legal issues and state mandates was once the primary focus for the preparation of school leaders, education reform has created an urgent need for a strong emphasis on development of instructional leadership skills to promote good teaching and high level learning. Moreover, educational leaders must recognize and assume a shared responsibility not only for students' intellectual and educational development, but also for their personal, social, emotional, and physical development. The increasing diversity of school communities places a premium on school leaders who can create a vision of success for all students, and use their skills in communication, collaboration and community building to ensure that the vision becomes a reality.

WHAT WE KNOW AND BELIEVE ABOUT EFFECTIVE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Creating a Vision for Success

Effective leadership is at the core of every successful organization. Effective leaders collaboratively create a vision and establish a climate for people to reach their highest level of achievement. They communicate the vision and direct all actions toward achieving the vision. They mobilize resources and promote collaborative activities among partners to achieve the organization's goals. Effective leaders recognize their own strengths and attract competent people to enhance the organization's capabilities. They cultivate and focus the strengths of colleagues to achieve the shared vision. They welcome change as an opportunity for growth rather than an obstacle to be overcome, and they lead people through the uncertainty of a changing society. Effective leaders seek counsel and advice to learn from the knowledge and experiences of others while they freely offer their expertise to those who seek it.

Setting High Expectations for Student Achievement

Effective school leaders set high standards and strengthen instructional programs to help learners gain the intellectual and personal knowledge and skills they need to achieve success in today's society. They develop and support systems to assist all students, pre-kindergarten, elementary, middle level, and high school, in meeting the State Learning Standards. They create high expectations for students with special needs and English language learners. They set the tone for conversations about teaching and learning, and draw in all members of the school community to support student achievement.

Effective school leaders use analysis of best practices in education, society, and the country in order to be responsive and proactive in changing schools to prepare children for the future in which they will live. They focus on student achievement data and measure success in terms of positive student outcomes. They provide the motivation and encouragement that lead to success and they manage effectively in a changing educational environment. Effective school leaders collaborate and build mutually beneficial relationships with social service and health service partners who share their vision of success for all learners. They engage in long term planning and move beyond the immediacy of today into the possibilities of tomorrow. They promote an environment that supports continuous learning and sharing of knowledge.

"Everyone should be a leader... Deep, shared leadership builds strong and cohesive cultures."

Terrence Deal, Kent Peterson

Building the Capacity for Leadership

Effective school leaders develop the skills and talents of those around them. They are capable of leading change and helping others through the change process. They engage in shared decision making with the school community, including staff, students, and parents. They are both the guardian and reformer of the educational system, and they ensure that all groups are engaged in a common goal and moving in the same direction. Effective school leaders create partnerships with colleges and universities to

enhance the learning and preparation of aspiring teachers and school leaders. They recognize that leadership skills can be learned and they have an obligation to establish and nurture strategic activities to make certain that other individuals in the district develop as leaders. Effective school leaders share leadership responsibilities throughout all levels of the educational organization. They nurture and support a learning community that promotes the continuous growth and development of individuals who acknowledge and share responsibilities for high academic achievement of all students.

Demonstrating Ethical and Moral Leadership

Effective school leaders are models of ethical and moral leadership. They project integrity by promoting and supporting an environment where students and school staff are always trying to do "what's right." They demonstrate courage in difficult situations, and provide a model of moral leadership for others to emulate. They seek to make a difference in the lives of students, and impart a philosophy that positive relationships built on trust improve the quality of life for all individuals. Leaders with integrity are focused and purposeful, and are always attentive to being consistent with what they say and what they do.

DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE SCHOOL LEADERS IN NEW YORK STATE

Listening to the Learning Community

In the late 1990's, a series of forums and regional conferences involving over 3,000 leaders in education, the private sector, and community organizations were held around New York State to discuss school leadership. Following those forums, the New York State Board of Regents and Commissioner of Education, Richard P. Mills, convened a Blue Ribbon Panel on School Leadership. In March 2000, the Blue Ribbon Panel, chaired by Commissioner Mills, issued a statement on school leadership. The Panel emphasized the vital role of leadership in achieving success on the State's strategy to reform its education system to meet higher learning standards.

The Blue Ribbon Panel made three recommendations for ensuring quality school leaders across the State: (1) Create an environment where leaders succeed in improving student achievement, (2) provide quality preparation for school leaders, and (3) expand the scope and incentives for recruiting, developing, and retaining effective school leaders.

"Leadership is vital to the success of school reform. The task of school leadership is to create and sustain conditions that enable all students and teachers to reach the higher learning standards."

Blue Ribbon Panel on School Leadership

Acquiring Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership

School leaders need impressive skills to provide effective leadership in our diverse school environments. After extensive discussion with field leaders, the New York State Blue Ribbon Panel on School Leadership crafted a definition of the knowledge and skills required of school leaders that forms the foundation of New York State's leadership development effort.

Embodied in the following nine statements is the essence of leadership as conceived by the Panel and subsequently affirmed by those who have reviewed them. The essential knowledge and skills establish the base upon which leaders will be recruited and prepared to serve the children of New York.

Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership

1. Leaders know and understand what it means and what it takes to be a leader.

Leadership is the act of identifying important goals and then motivating and enabling others to devote themselves and all necessary resources to achievement. It includes summoning one's self and others to learn and adapt to the new situation represented by the goal.

2. Leaders have a vision for schools that they constantly share and promote.

Leaders have a vision of the ideal, can articulate this vision to any audience, and work diligently to make it a reality. Leaders also know how to build upon and sustain a vision that preceded them.

3. Leaders communicate clearly and effectively.

Leaders possess effective writing and presentation skills. They express themselves clearly, and are confident and capable of responding to the hard questions in a public forum. They are also direct and precise questioners, always seeking understanding.

4. Leaders collaborate and cooperate with others.

Leaders communicate high expectations and provide accurate information to foster understanding and to maintain trust and confidence. Leaders reach out to others for support and assistance, build partnerships, secure resources, and share credit for success and accomplishments. School leaders manage change through effective relationships with school boards.

5. Leaders persevere and take the "long view."

Leaders build institutions that endure. They "stay the course," maintain focus, anticipate and work to overcome resistance. They create capacity within the organization to achieve and sustain its vision.

6. Leaders support, develop and nurture staff.

Leaders set a standard for ethical behavior. They seek diverse perspectives and alternative points-of view. They encourage initiative, innovation, collaboration, and a strong work ethic. Leaders expect and provide opportunities for staff to engage in continuous personal and professional growth. They recognize individual talents and assign responsibility and authority for specific tasks. Leaders celebrate accomplishments. They identify recruit, mentor, and promote potential leaders.

7. Leaders hold themselves and others responsible and accountable.

Leaders embrace and adhere to comprehensive planning that improves the organization. They use data to determine the present state of the organization, identify root cause problems, propose solutions, and validate accomplishments. Leaders respect responsibility and accountability and manage resources effectively and efficiently. They require staff to establish and meet clear indicators of success. Leaders in education also know and understand good pedagogy and effective classroom practices and support sustained professional development. They recognize the importance of learning standards and significance of assessments.

8. Leaders never stop learning and honing their skills.

Leaders are introspective and reflective. Leaders ask questions and seek answers. Leaders in education are familiar with current research and best practice, not only in education, but also in other related fields. They maintain a personal plan for self-improvement and continuous learning, and balance their professional and personal lives, making time for other interests.

9. Leaders have the courage to take informed risks.

Leaders embrace informed, planned change and recognize that everyone may not support change. Leaders work to win support and are willing to take action in support of their vision even in the face of opposition.

PREPARING EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

The current program of formal education and experience has long served as an effective method for training future school leaders, and provided the primary method for entry of candidates into the ranks of school leadership. However, the movement to focus on student achievement through standards and accountability has dramatically changed the job of the school leader. Further, more than a third of the candidates who complete leadership preparation programs, never apply for a leadership position. The traditional formal education and self-selection process will likely not produce enough leaders to fill the up-coming gaps. New ways to identify, attract, and prepare leaders must be supported and developed.

New Practices Emerging in the Field

Traditional programs have not attracted or encouraged enough successful educators to aspire to positions of leadership. Only 68 percent of those acquiring certification apply for administrative positions. Regional meetings held across the State identified ways that leadership preparation programs are building on local strengths and adapting to the needs of a changing environment to attract and prepare more effective school leaders.

To respond to growing needs for a pool of qualified candidates for leadership positions, existing school leaders and others are **tapping successful educators** to aspire to these positions. These candidates have been recognized for their potential for school leadership through demonstrated leadership skills in their current positions; success in working with colleagues, students, and parents; and commitment to high achievement for all students.

Programs are striving for an appropriate **balance of theory and practice** for the duration of a candidate's preparation.

Field experiences are initiated at the beginning and continue throughout the program, rather than as a capstone internship. This experience provides aspiring leaders an opportunity to learn on the job while still guided by college/university and school district supervisors.

Successful school leaders are serving as **mentors for aspiring school leaders**. New leaders have continually cited mentoring experiences as critical to gaining the real-life knowledge and skills needed for effective school leadership.

Universities and colleges in collaboration with school districts are designing unique models of formal training and school-based learning experiences that address the difficult and emerging educational problems. **Case study and problem based approaches** are designed to use real data from schools as a way of gaining first-hand experience with issues.

New curriculum offerings are being introduced in **partnership with local schools**. Gaining skills in collaboration; learning successful strategies for school improvement; using data for improving student achievement; strengthening communication skills for working with staff, parents and the community; and building effective strategies for staff development are some examples of expanded curricular offerings emerging in program across the State.

Universities and colleges are beginning to provide **more integrated and interdisciplinary course offerings** in leadership education programs, bringing educators together with scholars from business, management, public policy, psychology, communications and other academic fields.

Candidates for leadership positions are being organized into **cohorts** to increase interaction and sharing of knowledge as they progress through their leadership education program.

Preparation programs are maintaining **relationships with graduates** to provide on-going support as candidates begin their careers as leaders.

Exploring New Pathways to School Leadership

Following several years of public discussion of leadership preparation, revisions to the regulations for leadership preparation programs have been enacted. The regulations address four key components for leadership preparation: (1) establishing a standard, (2) creating admissions requirements, (3) identifying program characteristics, including leadership experiences, and (4) ensuring program quality.

The following chart illustrates the differences between the former commissioner’s regulations for school leadership preparation and the recently adopted regulations.

Former Commissioner’s Regulations Part 52	Revised Commissioner’s Regulations Part 52
<i>ADMISSIONS</i>	
No specific guidance on admissions criteria for school leadership preparation programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recruiting historically underrepresented candidates ▪ Demonstrated leadership potential ▪ Multiple pathways
<i>PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS</i>	
No specific guidance on program characteristics for school leadership preparation programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collaboration with preK-12 school communities ▪ Competency based ▪ Meaningful leadership experiences (throughout the program, culminating in 15 weeks full time, or the equivalent)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mentoring from college faculty and school/district leaders ▪ Flexibility
CONTENT	
No specific guidance on school leadership competencies and/or assessments for school leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Content knowledge and skills specific to certification title ▪ Assessments aligned with the knowledge and skills
ACCOUNTABILITY	
No accountability measures for preparation programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Preparation programs must be accredited by a professional education accrediting association or the Regents ▪ Graduate performance on the assessments will be evaluated for program review

-

NEW YORK'S COMMITMENT: A VISION FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

As education leaders, our task is educating all children in New York to reach high standards and be life-long learners. Research shows that the leadership skills needed today are different from in the past, and preparation programs must adapt in order to better train people for leadership positions. School leaders who create a vision of success for all students, value diversity, and provide effective instructional leadership for high student achievement, are the key to educational success. Bringing this vision to fruition will take a concerted effort by all involved. It is the responsibility of leadership to set the tone, draw in the public, and ask incisive questions that must be deliberated within a learning community. Through this collaboration, the leaders define the path for educational and personal success for all students.

With these responsibilities in the forefront, we must motivate and inspire those who will strive for continuous school improvement, and never be satisfied that the job is "finished." Leading schools is demanding work and requires individuals of great skill and commitment. In New York, we are on a mission to provide skilled and committed leaders for every community.

