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Improving Leadership for Learning



Redefining Leadership Roles

Redefining Roles, Responsibilities, and Authority of School Leaders

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This report is one of a series produced by a research team at the Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, a national research consortium home-based at the University of Washington. Developed with support from The Wallace Foundation during the early stages of an initiative that explores central issues in the exercise of educational leadership, the reports synthesize studies, conceptual work, and examples of current and emerging practice.

The reports are intended to clarify each leadership issue, while assembling what is known from empirical studies. The information in these reports lays the groundwork for further study and practical experimentation by leaders and reformers in states, districts, and schools.

The first report offers an overview of leadership and leadership support in relation to the overarching goal of improving learning. The remaining six explore in more detail particular issues within that terrain.



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Searching for What We Know about the Roles, Responsibilities, and Authority of School Leaders

If there is a unifying concern for schools today, it is that students—all students—experience academic success. Whether through policy efforts such as the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act, or parental concerns about whether their child will succeed in school, learning takes center stage as the primary challenge for the nation’s schools.

A common aspect of schools that concern those who wish to see improvement in educational outcomes is the way that they are organized to meet the critical educational needs of their students. Central to the school’s organization and functioning are the *roles* that adults play in the school—what professionals do and what they are expected to do. These roles range from those of administrators to those of teachers, whose core responsibilities are for teaching and learning, to those of support staff, who ensure the school is safe and orderly, not to mention providing a host of ancillary or specialized services and administrative support.

Historically, overall responsibility for the school’s operation has fallen to a single individual, the principal—a role that through much of the last century has been largely vested in managerial expertise. Successful schools in the mid-20th century were often identified as clean and regimented institutions—well-oiled machines, running smoothly and causing little stir, especially for district superintendents. In many respects, they served to carry on traditions of “the way schools are” that had been in place for generations.

This characterization of schools no longer meets the need for high-quality teaching in a complex world nor for learning that substantively prepares students for modern life. Today’s schools face new and greater challenges:

- Increased accountability for learning outcomes, both traditional subject matter outcomes, such as literacy and mathematical skills, and emerging skills such as those related to technology and participation in a global economy.

- Complex social environments that reflect a society characterized by substantial economic, racial, ethnic, and language diversity.
- An educational landscape that is constantly changing, with new technologies and waxing-and-waning resources to support the work of schools.
- Polarized public opinion about the place and purpose of public education in American society.

Meeting these challenges asks more and different things of school leaders. In the view of many people inside and outside education, continuing to lead schools as they have been lead for a century simply won't do. Leading and learning have new dimensions that demand new skills, new knowledge, and well-examined core commitments. What does this complexity look like for school leaders? Consider the following case:

Theresa Lopez, a first-year principal, sits in her office at the end of a busy first two weeks of school in September. It's been an exciting start as she settles in at Summerton Elementary, a school in a challenging, "transitional" neighborhood of her city. Ms. Lopez took the position knowing the challenge would be substantial. Summerton has had three principals in the last five years, none able to turn around the academic reputation of the school—a school unable to meet "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) as mandated by state guidelines, expectations of NCLB, and the superintendent's hopes for a turnaround (particularly given an upcoming bond measure to the voters for school upgrades). The failure to turn around the school, unfortunately, is somewhat unsurprising considering the number of discipline problems that have chronically distracted past principals from establishing a clear focus on learning.

Ms. Lopez looks at the needs of the students with both optimism and a slight sense of desperation. She knows that more than three-quarters come from poverty. The rich diversity of the school and its community also means working with 14 different language groups each day. Based on last year's student assessment

data, there is a distinct gap between scores of white students and their non-white counterparts in various areas of both reading and math. If these student issues weren't enough, Ms. Lopez is concerned about the overall school climate. She is looking for ways to ensure that each of the families, regardless of their language and ethnicity, feel welcome—something that has not been historically present in this school.

Given the financial constraints of the district, even with 430 students, this principal knows she is on her own. No assistant principals are being provided to schools of this size, so she knows that the only way she will be able to get everything done is to share the load. Even in a short time, Ms. Lopez can sense there are some strong leaders who can help from the teaching ranks, but that's not been the way this school has run in the past. Ms. Lopez knows that it's going to take some time to make changes. In her initial conferences with teachers, she had a clear sense that Summerton's teachers are suspicious of any proposal that they see as distracting them from their classroom work.

With these needs in mind, Ms. Lopez is grateful for the support she has received from the district-assigned mentor, but she sometimes wonders what part of her principal preparation program equipped her for Summerton's unique challenges. The thought of tackling these seemingly insurmountable tasks alone elicits a level of anxiety higher than she could have ever imagined, and she finds it difficult to envision the possibilities of development opportunities that will get her prepared to do the job she needs to do. She worries how she'll balance the managerial needs of the school with the time she wants to spend in classrooms working with the teachers. For now, she takes it a day at a time and continues to hope that by spring she will see a school that is moving forward when this year's test results are reported.

For Ms. Lopez, whether she leads this school for the long term will depend on her ability to address challenges and conditions for learning that will test her preparation and resolve to the limit. She will need to develop a

shared sense in her school that everyone is responsible for its success, and the persistent pursuit of equitable learning opportunities for children will require every effort they have. At the same time, pressures to ensure that test scores continue to rise will challenge the entire school to protect a broad-based curriculum that does more than simply prepare test-takers.

Ms. Lopez graduated from an approved principal preparation program within her state. Ostensibly, the credential means that she has demonstrated competence in a set of skills that the licensure environment has identified as the basis for leading schools. Now, once on the job, she has quickly learned that what she was taught in this program has not equipped her for everything she is dealing with. She is filled with questions about her new role, and yet her only recourse is the phone number of a more experienced principal, who has offered to talk if she wants to. The district in which she works has not put in place a system of supports for new or even experienced principals, and it assumes the sporadic visits by the director of elementary schools, her formal supervisor, will suffice.

What This Report Offers

This report addresses the core challenges faced by leaders such as Ms. Lopez in the current context of high expectations and accountability, often accompanied by inconsistent or limited support. The report assumes the leadership role that Ms. Lopez takes—or makes for herself—is based on a commitment to *lead for learning*—that is, to pursue a learning improvement agenda for the students in the school, the professionals who work directly with students, and the school as an organization.

To that end, this report frames what it means to lead schools toward improvements in teaching and learning, who does or can exercise that leadership (including but not limited to the principal), how leaders can be equipped to lead learning communities, what conditions empower school leaders to lead in this way, and how such leadership is cultivated in individuals or school communities over time. In short, the report considers school leaders' *roles and responsibilities*, and the *authority* they need to pursue an agenda of improving teaching and learning. To accomplish this, we have turned to the most current literature, especially the most prominent studies of the last decade. Our review makes no claim at being exhaustive, but rather it focuses on major

studies that have initiated new thinking and have the potential to shape practice. There are four purposes for this report:

1. Consider the roles, responsibilities, and authority of school leaders—both individuals in formal positions of authority and others who also exercise leadership—in light of the best research and theory concerning the nature and exercise of educational leadership.
2. Conceptualize roles and responsibilities of school leaders in relation to the improvement of teaching and learning, while paying attention to other dimensions of school leadership and the influence of context on leadership practice.
3. Review common practices and emerging strategies in the field and the implications and assumptions of such practices.
4. Identify unanswered questions for action and research concerning the evolving roles and responsibilities of school leaders.

We address these matters with special attention to school principals, who occupy the most central and visible position in the leadership of schools, but we recognize that limiting attention to these positions alone is too narrow and, in a sense, may contribute to the “leadership problem” in schools. Therefore, our definition of *school leader* includes any of the following participants:

- Assistant principals—whose roles, responsibilities, and authority have traditionally differed in important ways from principals.
- Teachers who exercise leadership in schools (usually on teacher rather than administrator contracts)—these include such roles as dean of students, activity directors, department heads, instructional coaches, content leads, mentors, etc.
- Parent and community leaders, especially when these individual participants participate in school-site governance arrangements.
- Student leaders—whose participation is more substantive in the upper grades.

We are also aware of the influence exercised by other formal educational leaders, including district-level leaders such as superintendents and school directors, coaches and mentors from elsewhere in the district or even external support organizations, state department of education leaders, teachers' union leaders, and administrator professional association leaders. In addition, there are a host of informal leaders in schools, such as experienced teachers or community leaders who exercise influence on the daily practice in schools.

Does Leadership Matter?

The roles and responsibilities of school leaders like Ms. Lopez, and others in the school who may share leadership with her, matter in several ways and in ways that may be changing. To take the principal's role, for example, a broad research base spanning the last 30 years reinforces and reiterates the critical role that principals play in the life and activities of schools. *How* the principal's role matters, however, and what comprises this role have evolved in response to the dominant themes in the policy context and academic deliberations of their time (Murphy, 1992), as suggested in these broad strokes covering the past two-and-a-half decades.¹

- 1980s—Leaders' roles in school effectiveness and improvement. This period, influenced by the seminal *A Nation at Risk* report, sought to identify characteristics of "effective schools" and to replicate those characteristics through list-driven actions of school leaders. During this period, reform focused on individual schools as the relevant unit of change.
- 1990s—Leaders' roles in turbulent change. In many respects, a "reform era," characterized in the United States by a sequence of federal policy initiatives (e.g., "Goals 2000: Educate America Act" [P.L. 103–227]), shifted the groundwork and assumptions about school leadership, creating a sense that leading schools in response to reform was akin to Vaill's (1989) notion of leading in a time of "permanent white water." In other words, the status quo was no longer tenable.
- 2000s—Leaders' roles in accountability-driven reform and entrepreneurship. In this period, particularly under broad state-based reform and related federal policy efforts, principals and other leaders are

more publicly accountable for the performance of the students in their schools on high-stakes tests. In addition, school leaders are called on to locate and utilize additional resources.

The evolution in thinking about the role of school leaders reflects a dance between ideas about what individual, titular leaders do and are expected to do and the capacity of a larger cast of characters who collectively influence school life and responsiveness of the school as a “learning organization.” Prompted in part by thinking in other fields, including business and industry, views of leadership have expanded to encompass a broader way of thinking about leadership in schools. *Leadership* is increasingly characterized as a feature of responsive schools—where engaging the broad participation of stakeholders and faculty ensures that the school can learn and change in response to the “adaptive challenges” it faces (Heifetz, 1994). At the end of the day, however, and especially in the United States, the idea that the principal provides a nexus of innovative ideas, resource acquisition, and empowerment continues to hold a prominent place in policy and practice.

The shift from a focus on individual titular leaders and individual behavior to a focus on the valued ends of the systems that leaders lead has helped to redirect attention from “management” of schools to “leadership” (Murphy, 2002). While management is necessary—what Ms. Lopez and administrators like her do to coordinate activities, take care of the school building, keep track of funds, respond to inquiries, maintain order, and so on—it generally does not take into account what might be needed to *guide* and *improve* the school. Such a leadership agenda implies a new set of roles and responsibilities and the attendant authority to diagnose complex modern challenges and doggedly focus the attention of the school and its community on the aim of powerful and equitable learning opportunities.

Understanding the Roles, Responsibilities, and Authority of School Leaders

Recent research helps to frame current and emerging understandings of the roles, responsibilities, and authority of school leaders. While the literature is vast, we have concentrated on studies published within the last ten years that approach leadership roles and responsibilities broadly, look beyond isolated exemplars of practice, utilize multiple methods, and are frequently cited sources. Three streams of research are especially helpful:

- *Research on the full array of roles and responsibilities exercised by school leaders.* Some approach the breadth of roles through meta-analytic strategies (e.g., Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Knapp, Copland, & Talbert, 2003). Others (e.g., Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, & Gundlach, 2003) have examined the existing roles and responsibilities exercised by school principals across a range of school types, or they have identified specific categories of leadership roles and responsibilities, such as capacities for initiating and sustaining change (Heller & Firestone, 1995).
- *Research on the way that leadership roles and responsibilities are shared or distributed across the school.* These studies often distinguish the idea of “distribution” from “delegation” and explore ways that the capacity to lead schools resides in and across various individuals in the school. From this work, theories of distributed leadership in elementary schools are beginning to emerge (e.g., Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001; Spillane, 2006), with the addition of perspectives from other countries and in other types of schools (Camburn, Rowan, & Taylor, 2003; Gronn & Hamilton, 2004). All of these studies contribute to the understanding of how the roles and responsibilities of school leaders, primarily principals, can shift from individual-centered to organizational-centered as shared responsibilities for the key outcomes of schooling.

- *Research on the connections between what leaders do and how students learn.* Accumulating studies, punctuated by attempts to synthesize these findings (e.g., Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003), have investigated a range of leadership effects on measures of student learning or other aspects of students' school experience, such as their engagement in academic work (e.g., Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999). This body of scholarship (as well as Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1996) demonstrates various empirical connections, direct and indirect, between leadership and learning outcomes, even though causal links are difficult to establish (Pounder & Ogawa, 1995). This work also underscores that both principal and teacher leadership are mediated by a variety of school conditions: purposes and goals, planning, organizational culture and learning, structure and organization, and information collection and decision making. Additional work from other countries (e.g., Barnett & McCormick, 2004; Sheppard, 1996) reinforces the importance of a focused learning vision and the interpersonal skills necessary to create a personalized environment.

Drawing on these literatures, we can identify central ideas that help to describe school leaders' roles and responsibilities and how they are changing. These ideas concern (1) the exercise of leadership in relation to learning; (2) conceptions of leadership roles and the allocation of school leaders authority; and (3) the forces and conditions driving change in leadership roles and responsibilities.

The Exercise of School Leadership, in Relation to Learning

The sea change in thinking about schooling and school leadership alluded to earlier, along with policy developments and changing community expectations, has put in place a new reference point for leaders' work: the "core activity" of teaching and learning. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) describe this trend:

The current educational reform context suggests that leadership should be directed specifically toward key outcome goals rather than concentrating on technical management, as was the tendency in the recent past (e.g., Boyan, 1988; Rosenblum, Louis, & Rossmiller, 1994). In public education, the goals to be

served increasingly are acknowledged to be centered on student learning, including both the development of academic knowledge and skill and the learning of important norms and values, such as democratic social behavior. ... Leadership as focused on and accountable for learning is the genesis of such phrases as “leading for learning,” “learning-focused leadership,” or “learner-centered” accountability (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 1997; DuFour, 2002; Knapp et al., 2002). This explicitly learning-focused goal for leadership does not narrow school leaders’ purview to the instructional system per se (as did earlier notions of instructional leadership). Rather it assumes that leaders will direct their attention to ensuring that all components and actions within the educational system support the learning of students. (p. 8)

The influence of leadership practice on student learning in schools has been explored from many angles. The consensus is that leadership does make a difference in the learning of students in schools, and extensive meta-analyses (e.g., by Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003) provide grounding for responsible claims that leadership does make a difference in student learning. While the direct influences are not easy to *prove* in a causal manner, the indirect lines of influence seem clear. Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) recently claim, “[L]eadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school” (p. 5).

Leaders’ effects on learning appear to involve more than just student learning. In this broader conception, leadership practice relates, in principle, to a broad learning improvement agenda in the school—or as one set of researchers have framed it, three interrelated *learning agendas*.

- *Student learning*, framed in broad terms to include more than “achievement” on single, albeit important, measures such as test scores.
- *Professional learning*, including the array of skills, knowledge, and values that teachers and administrators gain from practice itself, formal attempts to develop their professional capacities while on the job, and from initial preparation for their professional positions.

- “*System learning*,” conceived of as “insight into the functioning of the system [e.g., school, district system] as a whole to develop and evaluate new policies, practices, and structures that enhance its performance” (Knapp et al., 2003, p. 11).

This view holds that simultaneous attention to these three learning agendas in the unique contexts of their schools and districts enables leaders to create high-quality learning environments for students.

By adopting this way of viewing learning improvement as a reference point for leadership practice, the exercise of school leadership can be understood as a dynamic interaction as suggested by Figure 1 below. This interaction is between what leaders bring and learn about their work; what they actually do as leaders (leadership practice); and what students, professionals, and the system learn over time.

Figure 1. The Exercise of School Leadership in Relation to Learning



Conceptions of Leaders’ Roles, Responsibilities, and Authority to Act

Implied by the exercise of school leadership—and sometimes but not always made explicit—is a conception of the leaders’ role, the responsibilities they must undertake, and the authority they are allocated to fulfill these responsibilities. These conceptions reside in several places, chiefly

- in the minds of leaders and their followers.
- in official job descriptions, hiring expectations, and the ongoing formal supervision of leaders’ work.
- in leadership standards (national, state, or local) that offer a picture of desirable practice.
- in the criteria and instruments (if any) used to assess leaders’ performance.

- in the preparation or certification requirements (for those who aspire to a formal leadership position) and in the curricula of programs that support practicing leaders’ ongoing learning.
- the division of labor between levels in the system (e.g., districts and schools; states and districts) that are set up by governance decisions.

The conceptions of leaders’ roles represented in these ways may or may not agree with each other, and they may not reflect the growing attention to learning improvement.

Whoever holds them and however they are communicated, conceptions of school leaders’ roles reflect a wide array of enduring functions, each of which reflects sets of responsibilities. These functions have been variously described by scholars, but several connecting themes can be identified (Portin, 2005), as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Categories of School Leadership Responsibilities

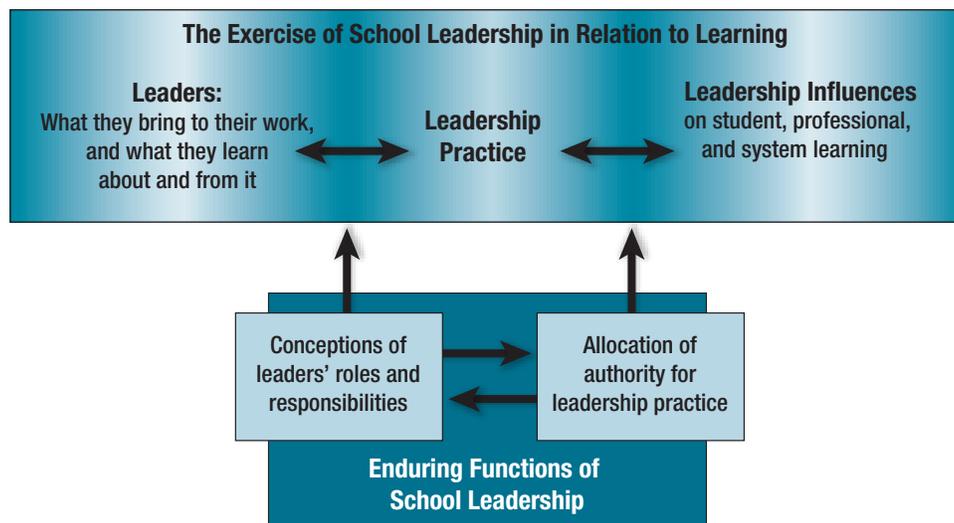
Connecting themes	Leithwood and Jantzi (2005)	Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, and Gundach (2003)	Knapp, Copland, and Talbert (2003)
Guiding the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting directions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic leadership • Cultural leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a focus on learning • Acting strategically and sharing leadership
Supporting professionals and professional work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional leadership • Human resource leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building professional communities
Organizing the school and connecting the school community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redesigning the organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managerial leadership • External development leadership • Micropolitical leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging external environments • Creating coherence

The themes displayed in Table 1 describe the array of responsibilities that are consistent with the exercise of leadership that is intended to bring about learning improvement. At the same time, they only begin to represent the breadth and complexity of things that school leaders need to learn, which underscores two aspects of school leadership roles: These responsibilities are more than a single individual can handle well (Portin et al., 2003), and more than one leader—or even a leadership team—can learn to do in a limited time frame. The pervasive sense of overload that many school leaders experience

(Portin, 2000; Shen, 2005) can be attributed, in part, to the expectation that they can fulfill all of these responsibilities and do so the moment they set foot in a new school.

School leaders' frustrations may derive from another source as well. As suggested by the horizontal arrows in Figure 2 below, the conception of leadership roles and responsibilities that pertain in a given school and district context has implications for the authority granted to school leaders to fulfill these responsibilities, and vice versa. Yet the allocation of authority and conceptions of leaders' roles and responsibilities do not always match. Thus in developing the human resource of the school staff, a school principal may have little authority or even influence over the hiring of staff for the school. In addition, he or she might be constrained by categorical program rules to keep programs separate, thereby frustrating attempts to create coherence in the school program.

Figure 2. Leadership Roles, Responsibilities, and Authority to Act



In summary, the sheer number and variety of responsibilities facing school leaders, the emerging imperative to focus on learning improvement, and the multiple sources of expectations for school leaders' work raise important issues about school leaders' roles, responsibilities, and authority to act:

Distribution of leadership, especially for instructional leadership. In line with emerging ideas about leadership as a distributed function within

the school rather than the sole province of formal titular leaders, observers are beginning to think more systematically about how leadership can be productively distributed and how the distribution can be managed over time. This matter is especially important in the case of instructional leadership, a function that can draw on the expertise of various individuals in the school, among them teacher leaders. The issue is not just one of dividing labor among more than one individual. Rather, the matter implies that school leadership needs to be re-imagined and more broadly construed as actions and roles that school personnel in both formal and informal roles play in a coordinated fashion, rather than the function of any one person (Spillane et al., 2001). This implies the need to value and engage teachers as active co-participants in the leadership work—specifically, the instructional leadership work of a school.

Support for leaders' initial and ongoing professional learning. It is clear that initial preparation for school leadership can never teach aspiring leaders all that they need to know to assume the kind of school leadership role envisioned here (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005). Especially with regard to the matter of leadership distribution just discussed, aspiring and practicing school leaders need varied and powerful opportunities to learn about—and from—their leadership work. This raises questions about which kinds of supports for leaders' learning are likely to have the greatest effect on their conceptions of their role and how to fulfill it. Various ingredients—such as principal support networks, coaching systems, peer support networks, and leadership assessment systems—are beginning to demonstrate what it would mean to guide the professional learning of practicing school leaders toward new conceptions of the school leaders' role in relation to learning (e.g. Fink & Resnick, 2001; Marzolf, 2006). Despite devastating critiques of the typical state of principal preparation (e.g. Levine, 2005), some powerful forms of initial preparation for school leadership roles are emerging (e.g., Kimball & Sirotnik, 2000; Davis et al., 2005; Jackson & Kelley, 2002).

Alignment of expectations for school leaders' roles. Because conceptions of school leaders' roles and responsibilities reside in multiple places, the possibility of misalignment is likely and troublesome. What are school leaders to do when their job description, the assessment instrument used to measure their performance, and the espoused leadership standards do not match each

other, nor place much emphasis on learning improvement? Recent research on state licensure requirements for school principals is revealing that many, if not most, states pay little attention to learning improvement and learning-related matters in the certification criteria that spell out what aspiring principals need to know to get an initial administrative license (Adams & Copland, 2005). The embedded conception of the school leaders' role is thereby at odds with the emphasis on learning-focused school leadership that is beginning to emerge in many quarters. The challenge this example and others like it raise is for the different sources of expectations for school leaders' work to move toward greater consensus (though complete consensus is never possible in a multilevel, pluralistic system of education).

Empowerment of school leaders. While there are always trade-offs in the devolution of authority to the school level, the logic of a leadership role that is responsible for substantial improvement in teaching and learning implies that school leaders can exercise more discretion over hiring, budget, and deployment of staff, not to mention curriculum in many instances, than they are often granted. Various attempts at decentralizing authority to school leaders have encountered these trade-offs, for example in big city governance shifts and the small school movement (e.g., Hill & Celio, 1998; Fliegel, 1993; see also Plecki, McCleery, & Knapp, 2006). Though tensions can exist between increased discretion for school leaders and systemwide attempts to bring instructional practice into line with ambitious standards, these two goals are not necessarily in conflict (Gallucci et al., 2006). Serious thought needs to be given, then, to governance arrangements and the division of labor across levels in the educational system that permit school leaders to meet the many responsibilities their roles imply. It is not an accident that some emerging models of recruitment and preparation for school leaders, such as New Leaders for New Schools, make a point of placing new principals in schools where negotiated arrangements permit them adequate school-level discretion (Anderson & Louh, 2005).²

Environmental Forces Affecting School Leaders' Roles and Responsibilities

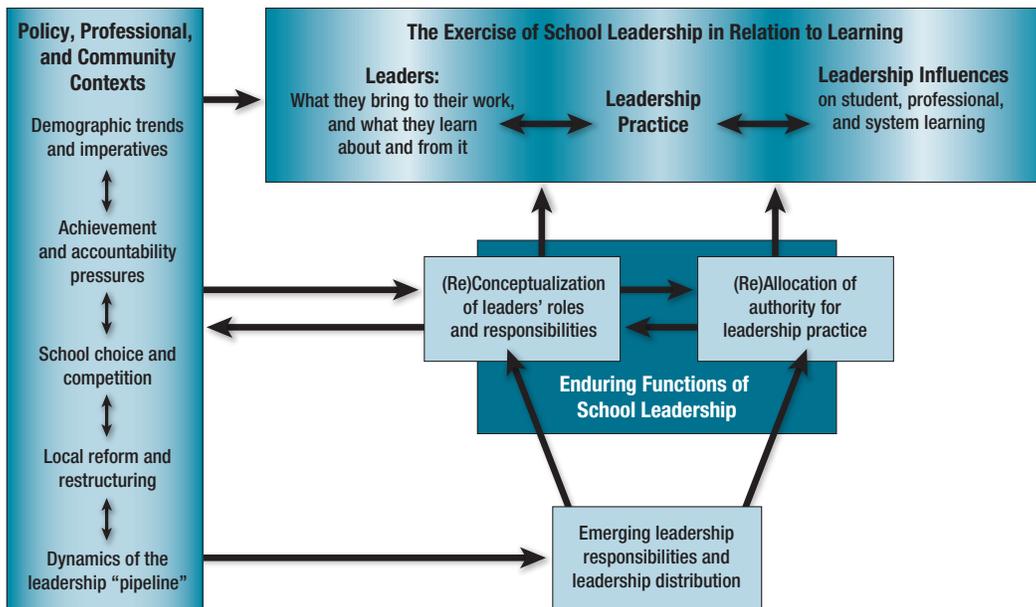
The discussion of the learning improvement imperative for school leaders, their role conceptions, authority allocation, and related issues has implied the pressing influence of developments in the environments in which school leaders work. These developments include the changing face of the communities

served by the schools, the policy actions of the federal and state government, and the policy responses of local jurisdictions. Of particular importance are the following:

- *Demographic trends and imperatives.* Increasing socioeconomic, racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity in the student population, and the imperative to serve all these students well.
- *Achievement and accountability pressures.* The press for improving student achievement, especially test scores stemming from federal and state policies.
- *School choice and competition.* The critique of public schooling and the growth in alternatives to public schooling.
- *Local reform and restructuring.* Experimentation with districtwide and school-specific reforms to meet high expectations and address enduring deficiencies in schooling.
- *Dynamics of the leadership “pipeline.”* A crisis of administrator recruitment, preparation, and associated policies.

These developments are exerting profound influence over the way educators and the stakeholders for public education view school leadership, what they expect of those leaders, and what the incumbents in these roles do to meet their responsibilities, as suggested by Figure 3. At a minimum, these developments are pushing participants to reconceive school leadership roles, reconsider the degree of authority granted to school leaders, and expect school leaders to take on new and different responsibilities. But beyond, and because of, these pressures for change, the environment for school leadership today and in the foreseeable future will require those who take on leadership roles to acquire new knowledge and skills, commit to a different set of core values, and develop new images of possibility for the schools they lead and how they are led.

Figure 3. Forces and Conditions Driving Change in Leaders' Roles



Demographic trends and imperatives. Change in the roles of school leaders is anchored to pervasive demographic trends in the student populations served by schools. Of the 48 million students in America's public schools, 39 percent are classified as minority students (NCES, 2003). This diversity is represented differently in various communities, from 62.5 percent minority population in large and midsize cities to 20.8 percent in small town and rural contexts. Diversity in race, ethnicity, language, and religious groups represents both the vital mix of American society, but often also signals historic disparities in educational opportunity that schools are responsible for remedying, which has been a major focus of educational policy in the past decade or more.

An added complication concerns the schools' responsibility for immigrants (particularly undocumented immigrants), guest worker families, and those for whom English is a second language (Youngs & Youngs, 2001). Of special concern in southern border states, but increasingly present in communities across the land, this dimension of student diversity confronts the schools and, hence, school leaders and policymakers with difficult decisions about how to tailor instructional programs and provide support services that

will help all children succeed. Exactly how to proceed is far from clear, though recently emerging studies may alleviate the federal and state policy debate around ESL and bilingual education (Thomas & Collier, 2002).

The resulting “achievement gap” among students calls for a different kind of school leadership. Observers point to the importance of the leaders’ moral commitment to addressing such gaps (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003) and to the leaders’ increasing cultural competence and knowledge of linguistic diversity (Ward & Ward, 2003). In addition, schools serving primarily communities of color continue to be largely led by white school leaders, and even with the recruitment of more leaders of color, white school leaders will still play a prominent role. This fact poses subtle and difficult questions about what it means for white educators to exercise culturally responsive leadership.

Achievement and accountability pressures. Attention to the diversity of the student population is also a central tenet of standards-based reform policy, promulgated by the federal and state government. Bringing all students up to an ambitious standard of academic learning in basic subjects has become the cornerstone of nearly two decades of state reform policy, and more recently the federal NCLB Act. These policies make attention to all students’ learning a central fact of school leaders’ lives, but they also give a specific and generally limited meaning to it: improving test score achievement and other quantitative measures enough to demonstrate AYP as defined by NCLB. The key to ensuring that no child is “left behind” is that schools are considered to have made AYP only if all student groups, including poor and minority students, students with limited English proficiency, and students with disabilities, demonstrate progress. Many states are implementing school improvement planning programs to address these high expectations of NCLB.

The high stakes attached to test score improvement (or the lack thereof) mean that success or failure can have far-reaching consequences. School-to-school comparisons and district-to-district comparisons seem especially to impact funding (e.g., dollars following students) in open-enrollment districts; competition for students with schools in the private sector; and innovative school designs, such as magnet and academy programs used to attract students. Schools that do not make AYP are subject to increasingly stringent forms of state and federal intervention, and they may ultimately be taken over or their students given vouchers to attend any other school they wish.

The effects on school leaders' roles are many and are unavoidable. First of all, the accountability systems in which they work ratchet up the pressure on leaders to change their schools' performance and gives them relatively little time in which to show improvements. Second, by default, school leaders are faced with a relatively limited conception of learning—whatever is captured by state standardized tests in achievement scores. If they wish to work with a broader and richer view of learning, as discussed earlier, they will need to take conscious steps to guide the school community to retain or develop an expanded sense of the curriculum, thereby counteracting the potential narrowing of curriculum that high-stakes accountability can induce (Center on Education Policy, 2006), or preserving other values such as a democratic environment in the school, which some Scandinavian countries have found to be threatened by strict, centralized accountability systems (Moos, Møller, & Johansson, 2004). Third, NCLB is forcing states, districts, and schools to look at and use quantitative and qualitative data and to place new importance on school leaders' capacity to use data effectively to improve classroom practice and student performance (see another report in this series, Knapp, Copland, Swinnerton, & Monpas-Huber, 2006).

School choice and competition. In response to perceived failures of the public schools, educational policies and the public are generating increasing competition in the choice of school, or at least desire for it, and this, too, has ramifications for school leaders' roles. In the resulting climate, charter schools, small schools, home schooling, and the prospect of voucher-supported choice within a free “marketplace” of schools are expanding the supply of what are perceived as “good alternatives” to currently available public schools (Hill, Pierce, & Guthrie, 1997). The provisions of NCLB formalize students' access to these alternatives by holding out vouchers as the ultimate sanction for schools that do not make adequate progress. In such an environment, school leaders are implicitly or explicitly charged with recruiting students and marketing their schools at the same time that they redouble efforts to improve performance.

This development gives new meaning to the attempt to “engage external environments that matter for learning” (Knapp et al., 2003). Principals of schools engaged in various market-driven efforts, for example, may have additional leadership functions related to external development and political leadership (Portin et al., 2003). Regardless of whether a specific choice policy

is in place, the need to be maximally responsive to parents and other constituents for public education adds to the responsibilities of school leaders.

Local reform and restructuring of schools. Choice policies are only one category of reform activity at the local level; schools and districts around the country are adopting and implementing many other reform models that often entail redesigning the structural and instructional practices of a school (e.g., Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Bodilly, 2001; Wagner, 2003). Sometimes these reforms treat the school as the relevant unit of change; just as often the district as a whole is the reform target, with implications for the teachers and administrators in schools and how they do their work (e.g., Hightower et al., 2002; Togneri & Anderson, 2003; Hubbard, Mehan & Stein, 2006).

The success of such reforms hinges ultimately on the quality of school leadership, along with appropriate resources and supports from elsewhere in the educational system. Redesigning practices without developing the motivation and commitment behind those practices will rarely lead to lasting changes in practice. Focusing on the motivation and commitment to change practice without the structures and tools may lead to a congenial culture, but little change. School leaders find themselves facilitating the *reculturation* of the schools at the same time that they preside over the redesign of school schedules, staffing configurations, student assignment, curriculum, and so on. This balancing act poses new challenges in building professional community and bringing the changes to bear on instructional improvement. This is nowhere more clearly seen at present than in the ongoing efforts to reform and transform comprehensive high schools (see Copland & Boatright, 2006).

Dynamics of the leadership “pipeline.” A final set of environmental activities concerns the ways that individuals are attracted to and prepared for formal administrative positions (e.g., principal) and other less formal roles (e.g., teacher leaders). Here school leaders work in an environment in which fewer qualified individuals are stepping forward than in years past to assume administrative posts (Gilman & Lanman-Givens, 2001) while at the same time the institutions that prepare and credential new administrators are under intense critique (Levine, 2005; Orr, 2006; Murphy, 2006; Teitel, 2006). The issue of recruitment and preparation is also directly connected to the ongoing work of many professional associations related to leadership practice standards. The fact that Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards are now the adopted criteria for credentialing in most states under-

lines their importance as a primary driver for current preparation and assessment.

In response to, or in anticipation of these critiques, renewed attention has been directed to the structure, timing, and content of leadership preparation; to alternative ways in which leaders can be recruited and inducted into the work of leading schools; and to the array of possible opportunities for continuing the professional learning of practicing leaders. These developments are beginning to acknowledge that leaders have different needs across their careers that necessitate different learning experiences, mentoring, and support. They are also taking account, in some instances, of ways that teacher leadership can be more formally cultivated and even defined, as in the movement to identify national standards for teacher leaders, similar to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification for teachers (NSDC, 2000). Such a move makes more operational the notion that the scope of leadership responsibilities merits a shared approach to the work.

These developments in the environment of schools bring one full circle to the conception of leaders' roles. In many respects, efforts to define and strengthen the leadership "pipeline" are reflecting, or even prompting, a reconsideration of these roles.

Common Practices and Emerging Strategies

Many of the concepts and issues outlined in the prior section reappear in practices and strategies undertaken by schools, districts, and states to redefine school leadership roles, responsibilities, and authority allocations. Among these activities are three sets of practices and strategies that illustrate a range of current experiments. We describe each with selected examples.³

- *Distributing and redesigning leadership roles.* Developing new models of leadership that are based on distributing leadership practice across the school organization and/or redesigning formal leadership roles.
- *Changing entry routes and recruiting strategies for leadership roles.* Creating additional pathways into administrative positions through licensure, certification, and accreditation changes.
- *Enriching support for leaders' professional learning.* Providing educational and professional learning opportunities for current administrators and aspiring administrators.

Distributing and Redesigning Leadership Roles

Working at both the local and state levels, efforts are under way to reconstruct school leadership roles by formalizing the distribution of school leadership responsibilities among various staff in the school and by creating policies and structures that redesign existing administrative positions. Distributed models are often motivated by the increasing demands of NCLB and pressure to attend to the instructional needs of the school in addition to operational and management needs. These models also acknowledge that many current principals and others in formal administrative positions simply lack the skills or experience to provide requisite instructional leadership. Three strategies are especially popular. The first creates new positions with instructional leadership responsibilities (e.g., instructional specialists or coaches); the second takes advantage of existing instructional leadership expertise among the school staff (by formalizing teacher leadership positions); and the third cultivates collective leadership with teachers' "professional learning communities."

Creating instructional specialist or “coaching” roles. It is natural enough to distribute instructional leadership responsibilities when there are others besides the principal dedicated to this purpose. Although a variety of coaching models are in use, most offer intensive professional development for teachers, typically through repeated one-on-one encounters between coach and teacher, but also through a combination of individual and group activities; alternatively, coaching systems are being developed that seek to build the school’s or district’s capacity for comprehensive reform (Brown, Stroh, Fouts, & Baker, 2005). The former model often entails hiring content-specific instructional coaches based in the district office or sometimes assigned to a particular school who specialize in a curriculum area such as math or literacy. Under the latter model, district-based or externally based “school change coaches” use a variety of strategies to help schools or districts initiate and sustain change and improvement (Camburn, Rowan, & Taylor, 2003; Datnow & Castellano, 2001; Neufeld & Roper, 2003, Smylie & Denny, 1990).

One of the more extensive programs for content-based instructional coaches is found in Boston’s Plan for Excellence, in which part-time staff developers are provided to each school to “assist teachers as they collectively identify what they need to learn in order to teach what their students need to know.” A variety of externally based coaching organizations provide school change coaches to schools and districts. Some of the larger ones are the Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools (BayCES) based in Oakland, California; Change Leadership Group (CLG) based at Harvard University; the Small Schools Coaches Collaborative based in Seattle, Washington; and the Southern Maine Partnership based in Portland, Maine. Under these kinds of arrangements, coaches and the principal offer a potentially complementary leadership resource to the school, though there is no guarantee that these resources will be well coordinated or mutually reinforcing.

Formalizing teacher leadership roles focused on instructional improvement. Rather than create wholly new instructional leadership positions, as in coaching arrangements, other systems are seeking to designate teachers in formal roles of “teacher leader” or “mentor.” The conceptions of teacher leadership that underlie such arrangements place teachers at the center of instructional improvement (York-Barr & Duke, 2004), as in Connecticut’s BEST (Beginning Educator Support and Training) program, which provides

new teachers with an induction support team comprised of veteran teachers.¹ Accomplished teachers attaining National Board certification are also being used in some jurisdictions to support the instructional practice of their colleagues (Berry, Johnson, & Montgomery, 2005). These approaches to nurturing the instructional leadership capacity of expert teachers contrasts with a more typical management role that such teachers have often played in site councils, where they function more as a decision-making rather than a professional development arm of the school organization.

Creating or fostering professional learning communities. One of the primary responsibilities of formal school leaders is to support the professional learning of teachers. In the past, this support often entailed school leaders setting up professional development workshops for their staff or releasing them to attend such workshops, both of which were passive responses. Today, school leaders are being called to be instructional leaders and provide professional learning opportunities for teachers that engage them “in the pursuit of genuine questions, problems, and curiosities, over time, in ways that leave a mark on perspectives, policies, and practice” (Little, 1993, p. 133).

Rather than working through and with individuals (coaches, teacher leaders) in attending to the professional development needs of a teaching staff, formal school leaders may work more directly with groups of staff, in arrangements that develop “professional learning communities” among the staff. Here school leaders are engaging in a distribution of leadership that is exercised *collectively* by all members of the professional community. Achieving this result means creating structures—such as curriculum teams, critical friends groups, lesson study groups, literacy teams, technology teams, and team teaching structures—where teachers have the opportunity to learn together through teaming and collaboration. Changes in schedules, task assignments, and even teaching contracts are often necessary to lay the groundwork for viable professional learning communities, as is facilitation of the teachers’ communities to “establish distinctive expectations for teachers’ work and interactions with students” (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001, p.10). Such arrangements recognize that teachers can learn from one another, assuming ownership of their own professional learning, but they imply the convergence of different conditions and actions on the part of the initiating leaders, who “set conditions for teacher community by the ways in which they manage school resources, relate to teachers and students, support or

inhibit social interaction and leadership in the faculty, respond to the broader policy context, and bring resources to the school” (Mclaughlin & Talbert, 2001, p. 98). Creating and fostering professional learning communities through such means is the responsibility of both teachers and school leaders.

Redesigning and differentiating administrative roles. Besides seeking others in schools who can shoulder part of the work of school leadership, attempts to revamp school leadership roles are sometimes focused on formal administrative positions such as the principalship itself. In this regard, state and national efforts to define and adopt the standards for leadership practice represent one big step. Over recent years, a variety of leadership standards have been developed through professional associations and other education organizations, among them, the ISLLC, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), the Educational Leaders Constituent Council (ELCC), the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), and the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL). The leadership frameworks and standards created by these groups are currently being used to inform both leadership practice and preparation programs, especially ISLLC, currently in use by 46 states to guide administrator certification and preparation programs, as well as offering a broad set of expectations for practice in the field. While they exert only a broad, diffuse influence over the leadership practice in schools, these leadership standards are part of a process of recasting what it is that school leaders should be doing. Among those expectations, leadership standards have begun to clarify the centrality of school improvement and attention to teaching and learning in the repertoire of leaders’ responsibilities (Fink, Harwayne, & Davis, 1999).

Local-level experimentation with administrative roles can offer more concrete examples of enabling the greater focus on teaching and learning that the leadership standards call for. In one instance, attempts at differentiating administrative responsibilities and allocating them to different individuals have enabled principals to focus a far greater proportion of their time and energy on instructional leadership. In each school in Jefferson County, Kentucky, School District, a School Administrative Manager (SAM) takes on non-instructional operational management tasks. Here, prior to hiring SAMs, 29 percent of principals’ time, on average, was being spent on instruction, as compared with 65 percent following the redesign (Slusher, 2005). This example illustrates a strategy that enables school leaders to gain insight into their

day-to-day work and utilize that information to improve upon their leadership practice. Other approaches to differentiating school leadership roles emphasize the identification of specialized expertise among experienced school leaders. One example is the Virginia School Turnaround Specialist Program (VSTSP) at the University of Virginia, a partnership of the Darden Graduate School of Business Administration and the Curry School of Education. The program purports to prepare school leaders with special skills and aptitude for “turning around” struggling schools.

Changing Entry Routes and Recruiting Strategies for Leadership Roles

As school leadership standards grow in visibility and importance within state systems of education, policymakers face the opportunity to reconsider licensure and certification for newly minted or continuing school administrators, as well as alternative avenues for entry into administrative positions.

Revising licensure and certification requirements. Several states and districts have pursued initiatives to support alternative licensure requirements for administrators, and in some cases these requirements have highlighted the learning-focused aspects of school leadership roles (Adams & Copland, 2005). More often, however, this policy tool has not yet been used to recast these roles in terms that realize the primary focus on learning discussed earlier in this paper. Only six states base licensure primarily on learning-focused knowledge and skills, while twenty-eight others included additional criteria (Adams & Copland, 2005).

Still, recent changes in certification and licensure requirements passed in ten states suggest that state policymakers are beginning to reconsider the relevance of this policy tool to preparation and selection of individuals for school leadership roles. The changes do not always concern the content of what new school leaders should know and be able to do, but rather they reflect a desire to make such requirements more flexible, thereby allowing a wider range of individuals into school leadership positions. For example, in recent years:

- Missouri introduced and passed three bills aimed at modifying administrator certification rules, fostering administrative mentoring, and improving administrative effectiveness.
- Rhode Island revised the licensure and certification system for all educators, and in some cases, enhanced the flexibility of the requirements.

- Massachusetts recently dropped its prerequisite that all new administrators earn graduate degrees by allowing the completion of an internship under an experienced school leader.
- New Jersey approved a measure making it easier for licensed administrators to transfer their credentials from other states, thereby honoring the skills and knowledge gained elsewhere.

Revisions to licensure requirements such as these are occurring within a political debate about the essential skills that school leaders must bring to their positions. In this debate, some argue that managerial expertise trumps instructional know-how, especially in leading “turnaround” schools, while others assert the importance of understanding teaching and learning deeply.⁵ Redesigning the certification process to open new avenues to school leadership positions. Connected to the revision of state licensure and certificate requirements is the creation or redesign of alternative certification processes. Internships, mentoring, and evidence of knowledge and skill acquisition from other sources have been added to the more traditional coursework as important measures of a potential school leader’s viability in the certification process. Coupled with this redesign process is the creation of alternative pathways to the principalship. For example, in an effort to recruit, train, and retain eligible school leader candidates, states have developed other routes to the profession outside of traditional higher education preparation programs. The U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Innovation and Improvement, often considered the department’s entrepreneurial arm, provides grants through the School Leadership Program to assist high-need districts, in partnership with institutions of higher education or other non-profit organizations, to create these pathways. Though many projects closely mirror what would be considered a traditional principal preparation program, there are some districts that have teamed with non-higher education organizations to create pioneering programs. Private ventures such as New Leaders for New Schools offer their own nontraditional programmatic preparation for school leadership.

Recruiting strategies to diversify the pool of potential school leaders. Often overlooked by more practical concerns is that of recruiting those from diverse backgrounds into the leadership candidate pool. Schools serving primarily communities of color continue to be led by white school leaders. Thus, efforts are under way in some states to recruit more leaders of color.

For instance, Indiana and Oregon have begun recruitment campaigns focused on placing minority educators into leadership positions. Kentucky has created apprenticeships aimed at encouraging members of minority groups to become superintendents.

Enriching Support for Leaders' Ongoing Professional Learning

Whatever is done to encourage qualified individuals to assume leadership positions—and in the course of doing so, redefine the nature of those positions—does not remove the need for leaders to have access to a rich array of professional learning opportunities. As noted earlier in this paper, the complexity of the roles that school leaders assume, both individually and in distributed arrangements, and the evolution of these roles toward a greater focus on learning improvement implies a great deal of new learning on the part of school leaders, learning that can only take place over extended periods of time.

Accordingly, various experiments are under way that maximize the intensity, duration, and potential impact of learning experiences for practicing school leaders, while tailoring these experiences to the needs and career stage of the participants. One such strand of activity emphasizes intensive coaching of school leaders, often in the context of leaders' learning communities. These activities are meant to bolster the leaders' grasp of instruction in particular content areas, such as literacy or mathematics, and their ability to guide teachers' improvement in these subject areas. Arrangements for sharpening principals' instructional leadership skills in New York City's Community School District 2 and San Diego are well-known examples of this approach, which supports school leaders' learning in "nested learning communities" with a focus on instruction (Fink & Resnick, 2001; Elmore & Burney, 1999; Hubbard, Mehan, & Stein, 2006). Variations on the theme are appearing in a number of other districts, often in partnership with external reform support organizations (e.g., Gallucci, 2006; Marsh et al., 2005).

Other approaches to school leaders' professional learning take the long view of the problem by constructing a "continuum" of learning experiences for school leaders across the span of their careers. The most fully developed example resides in the United Kingdom. Its model of preparation and support, developed and operated by the National College for School Leadership (NCSL), is keyed to five different phases of school administrators' careers

(Bush, 2006). The 22 programs offered by NCSL give school leaders a variety of opportunities over time to engage in cumulative learning about their roles, starting with programs designed for an “emergent leadership” phase (available to aspiring teacher leaders) all the way to a “consultant leadership” phase (available to experienced individuals who will mentor other leaders). Similar, but smaller scale continuum models are appearing in the United States, as at the University of Washington, which offers a sequence of linked graduate degree and continuing education programs for individuals aiming for leadership positions in schools, commencing with a master’s program for teacher leaders and leading to a Doctorate of Education for seasoned school leaders who aspire to broader systemwide roles.⁴

Still other models seek to bring together different kinds of leaders in arrangements that provide mutually reinforcing networks of support for learning. Connecticut’s Distributed Leadership initiative is a case in point.⁵ Part of The Wallace Foundation-supported plan to develop capacity for sustained improvement in the state’s urban districts, this initiative features intensive work with cohorts of leaders at the district and school levels. District-based “knowledge management teams,” consisting of the superintendent and other central office personnel, principals, and teacher leaders, focus on the development of districtwide and school-based strategies, processes, and practices aimed at improving academic achievement in an area of need identified by the district or school. At the school level, knowledge management teams consisting of teacher leaders, the principal, and other school-based support personnel, use a data-informed, continuous improvement process to impact student achievement in an area of need identified by the school or district. Teacher leaders meet regularly with their colleagues, the principal, and a coach from the state’s Urban Leadership Academy to assess the impact of their work on student learning. Support for professional learning is thus embedded in the daily work-life of various leaders, and the responsibility for improved achievement is shared among all the levels of the organization.

Implications of Emerging Strategies for Redefining School Leadership Roles

Many of the strategies described above imply supportive conditions and a larger *leadership improvement strategy* embedded in district and state policies. Actions taken in the district and the state policy environment are thus

part of the process of redefining and realizing school leadership roles and attendant authority allocations. Consider the following:

- *Financial supports.* Many of these distributed leadership models necessitate investment in release time for teachers, mentors, or coaches to do “the work” of mentoring, coaching, leading for learning, and professional learning. Money is also needed to support other groups or individuals who guide the professional learning of these individuals.
- *Supportive structures.* To encourage teaming and the formation of professional learning communities, changes in school schedules may be needed to ensure teachers have the time and availability to get together, talk about their practice, or collaborate.
- *Contractual supports.* The ability to implement some of the distributed leadership models is impacted by union contracts, which govern various aspects of leadership activity in schools: for example, contracts may or may not permit teacher leaders to be involved in supervision and evaluation of teaching staff or grant principals authority in hiring, firing, and professional development.⁶

Anticipating these kinds of supportive conditions, and taking steps to put them in place, becomes a central task for those who wish to see changes in school leaders’ roles become institutionally rooted.

Unanswered Questions about the Redefinition of School Leaders' Roles and Responsibilities

Imagining productive redefinitions of school leadership roles and responsibilities—especially ones that are oriented toward learning agendas—is relatively uncharted territory at present. The convergence of environmental forces, expectations, and scholarly understanding sets the stage for substantial steps toward role redefinitions that can be realized in large numbers of the nation's schools. However, doing so will mean that a number of questions will need to be answered more fully than we can at present, given the current state of practice in the field and the current base of scholarly knowledge about practice.

Questions about redefining school leaders' roles, responsibilities, and authority to act can be grouped in relation to the main categories of the framework. The questions concern (1) the implications of a focus on learning for school leaders' roles, and how leaders exercise leadership within that role; (2) the dynamics and viability of specific redefinitions of leaders' roles, responsibilities, and authority to act; (3) what leaders bring to and learn about roles and responsibilities in schools, and how that learning can be facilitated; and (4) conditions that support or complicate the redefinition of school leaders' roles, responsibilities, and authority to act.

Questions about the Implications of a Focus on Learning for School Leaders' Roles

The premise with which this paper began—that school leadership is ultimately about learning and learning improvement—raises a host of questions about the connections between leadership activity and learning outcomes that are somewhat beyond the scope of our discussion here. Ongoing research now under way at the University of Minnesota and Ontario Institute for Studies in Education is getting at these connections, building on accumulating findings of several decades of research (summarized in Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood et al., 2004). But several implications of the focus on learning for school leaders' roles deserve attention here:

1. What skills and capacities of school leaders (and leadership teams) are most emphasized by leadership roles that direct effort at the improvement of student, professional, and system learning? In what respects are leaders' prior experience and training least likely to have imparted these skills and capacities?
2. Do school leadership roles that emphasize learning improvement look different at the elementary, middle, and high school level? If so, how? What about in more and less disenfranchised communities?

Questions about the Dynamics and Viability of Specific Role Redefinitions

The argument of this paper makes it clear that school leadership implicates more leaders than school principals in distributed arrangements that are not yet well understood. Nor are the adaptations of school leaders' roles and responsibilities across a range of school types and settings understood. The following questions will help to pursue these matters:

3. What initiates and sustains viable forms of leadership distribution, especially those that strengthen the school's instructional leadership capacity, in which multiple leadership roles are coherently integrated rather than merely delegated or divided among different individuals?
4. How do distributed leadership arrangements in elementary, middle, and high schools make use of and develop the collective leadership capacity of teacher leaders, other support staff, and outsiders (e.g., external coaches, district staff)?
5. In what ways is the redefinition of school leaders' roles in local settings responsive to the needs and circumstances of particular schools and the goal of equitably serving particular groups of students in these schools? How is this response balanced with systemwide expectations for school leaders' work?
6. How do redefinitions of school leaders' roles ensure that all leadership functions, including daily management, get attended to?

Questions about What School Leaders Bring to and Learn about New Leadership Roles

Because the redefinitions of roles, responsibilities, and authority allocation constitute new territory for many current and aspiring school leaders, questions about the match between leaders' backgrounds and this new work, as well about the means to learn how to construct and fulfill such roles, come immediately to mind. One set of questions emerging from the current critique of leadership preparation programs lies beyond the scope of our discussion; these questions concern the design, content, and conduct of initial leadership preparation programs, mostly serving aspiring principals. Current experimentation with systems for supporting leaders' professional learning of practicing leaders is one clue that these questions are important to address. Among them, the following deserve attention by practitioners and scholars:

7. What robust forms of support for the ongoing professional learning of practicing school leaders accommodate the differences in leaders' learning needs that stem from their school level, its community setting, position, and stage in their careers?
8. What prior backgrounds (e.g., including teaching experience, management experience) predispose school leaders to work effectively in roles that feature the sharing of leadership and the persistent effort to focus it on learning improvement? How can potential leaders with these backgrounds be identified and attracted to leadership positions.
9. How can the efforts of leadership (preservice) preparation programs be well integrated with ongoing opportunities to learn about new leadership roles and responsibilities?

Questions about Conditions That Support or Complicate the Redefinition of School Leaders' Roles

In recognition of the many ways that environmental conditions affect how leaders approach their roles and what they are able to do within them, a final set of questions focuses on:

10. What explicit and implicit conceptions of the school leaders' roles and responsibilities reside within the leadership standards (if any) adopted in a given state or local district, in leadership assessment systems (if any), leadership standards, and in certification and licensure requirements for administrative leadership positions?
11. What are states and districts doing to align policies related to leadership roles with each other, with an emphasis on learning improvement?
12. What specific actions by state and local government are most conducive to the differentiation and distribution of school leadership roles and the expansion of the leadership cadre in schools (including individuals in formalized teacher leadership roles)?
13. How are governance arrangements and deliberations—especially those of state and local school boards, professional standards boards, and teacher or administrator unions—implicated in the redefinition of school leaders' roles, responsibilities, and authority to act?
14. How much and what kind of resources (people, money, time, information) are states and localities investing in systems of support for school leaders? What explains the levels and direction of investments?

Pursuing these four sets of questions will require the best efforts of practicing leaders, policymakers, and scholars over the ensuing years. The complexity of leadership work and its intimate connection to the contexts in which leaders work will not make it easy to develop robust answers that apply everywhere. But before the field settles on easy default answers—for example, equate the school leaders' role with test score improvement and nothing else—we need to take advantage of the window of opportunity that current developments afford.

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Endnotes

- ¹ A thorough review of the historical developments in principal roles can be found in Murphy (1992), *The Landscape of Leadership Preparation*.
- ² See <http://www.nlms.org>.
- ³ Our selection of examples emphasizes state and local sites undertaking experiments supported by The Wallace Foundation.
- ⁴ See <http://www.ctbest.org>.
- ⁵ Such debates, therefore, are likely to consider whether prior teaching experience should be a prerequisite for the principalship.
- ⁶ A description of the continuum model can be found at <http://depts.washington.edu/uwcel/programs/continuum.html>.
- ⁷ See http://www.state.ct.us/sde/dtl/t-a/leadership/saelp/saelp_dli.htm.
- ⁸ See Teachers Union Reform Network (<http://www.turnexchange.net/>)—a union-based organization supporting the reform of unions.



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