

*Key Elements of Leadership Excellence for Principals:*

# Support and Develop Individuals

*Provide support and development to each educator, through co-planning, co-teaching or co-leading, modeling, observing and providing feedback, and coaching.*

“The majority of the work that I do is in coaching my leadership team. I’m constantly taking notes about what am I seeing, what’s going well, what are our next natural steps, and how can I help this person I’m working with today to practice and get there?” —Principal Toni Perry

Principals focus on supporting and developing their schoolwide instructional leadership team—usually consisting of assistant principals and multi-classroom leaders—through which they can support all teachers.

Supporting and developing individuals includes planning, communicating, executing, and improving these actions:

- \* Co-plan
- \* Co-teach, co-lead, or model for others:
  - Great teaching
  - Great leadership
- \* Observe and give feedback
- \* Coach

**\* Co-plan**

Co-planning begins with **establishing a school vision and goals**. (See *Key Element of Leadership Excellence for Principals: Launch and Lead* for more details.)

Principals use individual meetings with multi-classroom leaders (MCLs) and meetings of the instructional leadership team (ILT) to **set consistent goals and techniques to be used schoolwide**, which support MCLs’ effectiveness and reduce stress.

**In weekly ILT meetings, principals guide the team on planning with and for their teachers.** Principals help their ILT members plan their coaching and leadership priorities, as well as other common needs throughout the school or specific grades.

“Every week I meet with them, **we go through their priority plan**, and their priority plan really dictates the road map in which they need to be going down,” Principal Sarah Reeves said. “It has everything from the students’ names which they are working with, to the teachers and which coaching points they are working towards, towards culture of care goals and how they’re best supporting their teachers during certain periods of the school year that might be a little bit overwhelming. That’s really kind of how I stay abreast to make sure

that everyone is feeling supported in the building, and it’s worked really well. Those priority plans really have kind of helped redefine conversations so that they’re very precise, they’re on point, there’s a follow-up accountability and it’s allowing me to really help lead my team to make sure that the time they are spending is aligned to their priorities and aligned to their long-term goals.”

Principal Rria Cruz-Soto found that her MCLs needed **common templates** for providing feedback to teachers, and **consistent protocols** for all meetings.

“We met over the summer and we planned consistent protocols across all of the MCLs, so we have protocols for a data meeting, for a co-planning meeting, for any type of meeting that an MCL could lead with a group of teachers; we came up with protocols so that they’re all doing it the same way. It was really important because we have schoolwide initiatives, and it’s important that everyone is receiving the same information and giving out the same information,” Cruz-Soto said.

“And for me, the most important thing that I wanted the staff to know is that the information that they’re getting from the MCL’s is the same information that I’m giving as well, so I wanted them to feel comfortable that it’s not a misinterpretation, that it’s not a perception, that this is actual information that is coming out of our instructional leadership team meeting.”

Principal Emily Miles also focused on **protocols for documenting how everyone receives feedback**. “If I’m providing feedback to teachers and they’re getting it from a couple of members of the leadership team, we want to make sure it’s all aligned. So I think just to maintain logs and documentation is crucial because it holds people accountable. I trust my leadership team—

they're there because I trust them—but one of my favorite quotes that I learned from a mentor principal was, 'You must inspect what you expect.' So if I expect them to be doing coaching and modeling and walk-throughs and providing feedback, I need to be able to inspect that, and I need to be able to inspect it in a way that is clear."

**\* Co-teach, co-lead, or model for others:**

- Great teaching
- Great leadership

Principals say that to be effective, **they must go into classrooms and attend some MCL team meetings, supporting their MCLs by staying deeply in touch with instruction.**

"When I'm in classrooms where I know what that teacher was just coached in, and then I'm able to affirm that or I'm able to give them in-the-moment feedback on it, that puts me in the space of being right there alongside the MCL, whether it is literally she's right next to me or that she just was a couple of days ago when I knew what she was doing. It allows the teacher to feel aligned support. **I would suggest to any leader that's getting ready to do this work that they put as much time into creating a system for how they'll support their MCLs** as they're putting time into figuring out how the MCLs will support teachers. If they're not balanced, and if both of those systems don't exist, you'll feel it right away, and you might not be able to identify that that's what it is." —*Principal Meaghan Loftus*

"The **majority of the work that I do is in coaching my leadership team**, so if I go to a PLC [teaching team meeting], for example, I'm there and I'm contributing to that PLC." —*Principal Toni Perry*

**\* Coach**

After she attends an MCL's team meeting, Toni Perry said, "I'm going to have a conversation immediately with that [MCL] to give them feedback," Principal Toni Perry said. "I'm constantly taking notes about what am I seeing, what's going well, what are our next natural steps, and how can I help this person I'm working with today to practice and get there? It's been very beneficial for my leadership team here to just be able to see in PLC meetings [my] modeling that leadership for them, but then also, in their coaching conversations. After the teacher leaves we have a coaching conversation around, 'OK, well, how did this go, what

can I praise you about and what can continuously get better?'"

Principal Jeremy Baugh provided both **individual and ILT coaching weekly** for his MCLs. "I think that that's a critical phase of the process, to provide them support throughout the year—weekly coaching meetings with me individually, as well as a group collaborative meeting once a week to talk about what our goals are and then, using tools like a Google doc form for walk-throughs that help us track all of our data from our teachers' walk-throughs. I'm providing a lot of leadership experience to them and a lot of direction on steps and thought process of how to work through a teacher day-to-day."

Principal Sarah Reeves also ensures that she meets weekly with her own teams. "The team members on the grade levels that I support, I meet with individually for check-ins every single week, and it might seem excessive to some principals but to me, it's **building their capacity**, and making sure that the information that I'm gathering based on walk-throughs and observations is being disseminated, and we're making corrective action plans to make sure that things are happening in the classroom in a timely fashion."

For Principal Janet Moss, a lack of consistency would undermine her MCLs, while staying out of their way and removing barriers for them provides significant support. "The last thing we want to do is give mixed messages, so whenever I'm giving feedback to a teacher, I have met with their MCL and talked about strengths and weaknesses and where we're going in the coaching and what it is we are focusing on right now, so that I don't veer off the path of improvement that is made for this teacher. I don't go rogue as an administrator, and neither does my AP, and go in and start giving feedback about something before we've talked to the MCLs. That very practice can undermine what your MCLs are trying to accomplish."

Moss continued: "**We let the MCLs do their work; when they hit a barrier, it's our job to remove the barrier**, and when they need other eyes on the teacher to look for improvement or look for specific things they ask us to go in and look for specific things. That partnership among us in the instructional leadership team helps to make the teachers feel like it's an organized and thoughtful process in developing their teaching techniques rather than hearing one thing from this side, one thing from this side and not knowing who to please."

Principal Sarah Cupelli used a **priority dashboard to hold her ILT members accountable and keep track of the coaching** she needs to provide to them. “If there’s a system of accountability for the adults, it’s also supporting them in getting that system of accountability for the students in the classroom.”

Many principals routinely use **videotaping** of their MCLs in action **to make their observations and feedback more reliable and useful.**

Principal Erica Jordan-Thomas modeled the use of videotaping in ILT meetings and one-on-one sessions with MCLs, who did the same with their teachers. MCLs taped themselves in situations such as co-teaching, teaching small groups, and providing feedback to a teacher.

Jordan-Thomas used videotapes of MCLs in a data meeting with their teams during what she called the “hot seat” time of an ILT meeting. “We share a 10-minute clip of an MCL in a data meeting with their teachers, and they have the opportunity to get feedback. We shower them with praise, letting them know the amazing things that they need to keep doing, and identify just one action step for them to be able to apply to their practice to make it even better.”

*Note: Some quotes have been edited for clarity and length.*

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**Learn More:** Watch the [Support and Develop Individuals](#) videos.

### Discussion Questions

1. Which actions in this element of instructional excellence are **strengths** for you or your team?
2. Which actions in this element of instructional excellence are **weaknesses** for you or your team? Think about actions you never take, fail to take as often as needed, or do not take as well as needed to achieve strong learning growth consistently.

3. What one to three specific changes will you or your team make to **use your strengths more** often or more consistently and **improve weaknesses** in the coming months?
4. Make a brief **action plan** with specific goals, roles, and time by which you will make specific changes!
5. Did your changes produce **better learning results**? If so, keep them. If not, think again about what other changes to make!

For more elements of instructional leadership and excellence, visit the [Instructional Leadership and Excellence webpages](#), which each have **video clips** of teacher-leaders who have achieved high-growth student learning; **discussion questions** or developing your team and yourself; **training links** for ongoing professional development; and other **developmental resources** including books, videos, articles, and tools

For more on an Opportunity Culture, visit [OpportunityCulture.org](http://OpportunityCulture.org).

We’re happy to hear your feedback on this element; [contact us!](#)

### Acknowledgements

This vignette was written by Sharon Kebschull Barrett of Public Impact. Thank you to LaShonda Hester for help in compiling quotes, Emily Ayscue Hassel for editing, and to Beverley Tyndall for producing the *Instructional Leadership and Excellence* videos that accompany this series.

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Please cite this publication as: Public Impact: Barrett, S.K. (2019). *Key elements of instructional excellence for principals: Support and develop individuals*. Chapel Hill, NC: Public Impact. Retrieved from [https://opportunityculture.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Support\\_Develop\\_Individuals\\_Principals-Public\\_Impact.pdf](https://opportunityculture.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Support_Develop_Individuals_Principals-Public_Impact.pdf)