Great Principals at Scale: Creating District Conditions That Enable All Principals to Be Effective

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Principals Matter

- The difference between having an average and an above-average school principal can impact student achievement by as much as 20 percentage points.
Current Conditions Often Hinder Principal Success

- Districts should enable principal success ....
- But too often, they hinder principals ...

NewLeaders

The Bush Institute
At the George W. Bush Presidential Center
We drew on a literature review and expertise from practitioner and research experts to create a framework outlining 15 conditions.

Sample of Expert Advisory Group Members:
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Mike Knapp
Kenneth Leithwood
School District Leaders
Charter School Leaders
Leading Foundations (Wallace, Gates)
Leading Universities (University of Virginia, University of Washington)
Effective Leadership Conditions Framework

- **Strand 1**: Aligned Goals, Strategies, Structures, and Resources
- **Strand 2**: Culture of Collective Responsibility, Balanced Autonomy, and Continuous Learning and Improvement
- **Strand 3**: Effective Management and Support for Principals
- **Strand 4**: Systems and Policies to Effectively Manage Talent at the School-Level

**Effective School Leadership**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effective conditions include...</th>
<th>But, too often....</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategic Plan:</strong> District has a strategic plan that identifies clear &amp; ambitious goals &amp; strategies for achieving the goals</td>
<td>Goals lack wide stakeholder input and buy-in; strategies shift frequently; plans include laundry list of initiatives</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational Structures:</strong> Organizational structures and staffing aligned to the strategic plan</td>
<td>Outdated structures, silos and redundancies create inefficiency and confusion for school leaders</td>
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<td><strong>Budget Alignment:</strong> Organizational budget is aligned to the strategic plan</td>
<td>Tough decisions to deprioritize or discontinue existing functions are rare</td>
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<td><strong>System Resource for School Support:</strong> Curricula &amp; data are aligned to the strategic plan &amp; support its implementation</td>
<td>Principals and teachers have to create aligned curricula and tools themselves</td>
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<td><strong>Goal Monitoring:</strong> Districts have systems for monitoring progress toward goals and expectations</td>
<td>Districts fail to know when strategies are failing and lack ability to make mid-course corrections</td>
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Examples from the Field
Strand 2: Culture of Collective Responsibility, Balanced Autonomy, and Continuous Learning and Improvement

Effective conditions include...

**Collective Responsibility:** District central offices and schools function as collaborative team members working towards the same goals.

**Balanced Autonomy:** Principals have discretion to meet the needs of their schools balanced with the necessary tools, support, and oversight.

**Continuous Improvement:** District values organizational learning and continuous improvement.

But, too often....

Central office plays a hierarchical command and control role. Interactions are focused on compliance. It is not safe to point out poorly conceived or implemented district policies.

Principals are required to implement policies designed without their input even when they are detrimental for a particular situation.

Districts do not collect information about implementation and cannot make mid-course corrections.
Examples from the Field
Principals' Role Definition: Principal role has been defined in a way that is feasible within resource constraints and enables leaders to make teaching and learning a priority.

Ineffective central office functions are simply waste principals' time; Meanwhile new instructional leadership responsibilities have been layered onto existing responsibilities.

Effective conditions include:

- **Principal Role Definition:** Principal standards are research-based and the evaluation process is fair, transparent, rigorous, and aligned to the standards.

- **Ineffective central office functions are simply waste principals' time; Meanwhile new instructional leadership responsibilities have been layered onto existing responsibilities.**

- **Principal Performance:** Principal standards are research-based and the evaluation process is fair, transparent, rigorous, and aligned to the standards.

- **But, too often....** Principal managers have differing expectations for principals; lack of clear expectations hinders open conversations about priorities and frank feedback.

- **Professional Learning:** Principal professional learning opportunities are ongoing, high quality, and focused on principals' needs.

- **District PD for principals typically involves workshop-style meetings where one-size-fits-all content is delivered to principals.**

- **Principal Managers:** Principal supervisors have the capacity and bandwidth to effectively manage and support principals.

- **Principal managers lack knowledge and/or time to develop principals. Caseloads average 24 schools.**
Examples from the Field
Strand 4: Systems and Policies to Effectively Manage Talent at the School-Level

Effective conditions include...

**Staffing Decisions**: Principals have authority to hire, reassign, or dismiss school-based staff.

**Teacher Performance**: Teacher performance is assessed through a transparent, fair, rigorous process, according to research-based standards and including student outcomes.

**Human Resource Systems**: Human resource systems enable schools to attract, hire, and retain top-quality candidates at all levels.

But, too often....

**Principals are not allowed to build their own teams. They are forced to take on excessed teachers or bargaining agreements allow teachers to choose their school and grade/subject placements based on seniority.**

**Assessment systems are burdensome and time-consuming; rules limit principals’ ability to observe and provide feedback.**

**HR departments focus on transaction processing; hiring processes are burdensome & time-consuming; lack capacity to support recruiting.**

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Examples from the Field
The Conditions that Matter Most

Conditions Framework

Strand 1
- Condition 1.1
- Condition 1.2
- Condition 1.3
- Condition 1.4
- Condition 1.5

Balanced Autonomy: Principals have discretion to meet the needs of their schools balanced with the necessary tools, support, and oversight.

Strand 2
- Condition 2.1
- Condition 2.2
- Condition 2.3

Principal Role Definition: Principal role has been defined in a way that is feasible within resource constraints and enables leaders to make teaching and learning a priority.

Strand 3
- Condition 3.1
- Condition 3.2
- Condition 3.3
- Condition 3.4

Principal Management & Development: Principal managers have the capacity to effectively manage and develop principals.

Strand 4
- Condition 4.1
- Condition 4.2
- Condition 4.3

Staffing Decisions: Principals have authority to hire, reassign, or dismiss school-based staff.
Toolkit

- **Rubric** – tool used by central office (and possibly principals) for assessing specific conditions in Strands 1, 3 and 4

- **Survey** – administered to principals and central office staff to gather their perceptions, specifically related to Strands 2, 3, and 4

- **Tool Map** – a quick reference to the conditions in each of the four strands and the tools used in assess that specific condition

- **Process Recommendations** – step-by-step recommendations on how to use the tools to collect data, assess current conditions, and action plan
For more information

- For full copies of the executive summary, report, and toolkit, you can visit:
  - [www.bushcenter.org/greatprincipals](http://www.bushcenter.org/greatprincipals)
  - [http://www.newleaders.org/newsreports/great-principals-at-scale](http://www.newleaders.org/newsreports/great-principals-at-scale)