Leadership Development Framework

Our Vision

To transform schools and provide an equitable education for an increasingly diverse student population, leadership must move beyond what the principal alone can accomplish. Effective schools are led by a principal who builds and shares leadership, so the collective power of the team actively disrupts oppressive systems, policies, structures, and practices that create or perpetuate disparities in education for systematically marginalized students. This process isn’t always linear, and individual principals will have different development trajectories; however, our goal in developing school leaders remains to improve their instructional leadership practices—holistically and responsively, through the four domains described in the framework, so that all students develop strong learning mindsets, and experience deep engagement and long-term transformative learning.

TNTP BELIEVES

1. Leadership development is most effective when we take an integrated approach that acknowledges and is responsive to the identities, mindsets, and assets that a leader brings to the work.
2. School transformation does not sit solely with the principal; it requires a collective and collaborative effort among the entire team.
3. “Equity” and “strong instruction” are not distinct leadership skills; they are woven into all four domains.
4. Principals consistently engage in a process of inquiry to understand the state of the system and the impact of their leadership on this system.

Note: Throughout this document, we use the terms “team” and “school community” expansively, inclusive of school leadership team members, teachers, school staff, students, families, and other community stakeholders.

Our Theory of Action

The theory of action articulates the relationship between TNTP’s work in developing effective school leaders, the four key domains of effective principalship, and the impact of collaborative leadership on key stakeholders, including teachers, staff, community stakeholders, families, and students. While this framework is primarily intended for our work with school leaders, the vision and aspects of the framework could be applied to leaders at all levels of school systems.
If TNTP develops leaders at all levels of the system through flexible leadership coaching models that are (1) responsive to the unique needs of our clients and consider the sociocultural context of the community, state, and educational landscape at-large; and (2) situate school improvement as an outcome of collective efforts of every member of the team, **then principals** will be positioned to demonstrate four key domains of effective school leadership:

1. **Unified Vision.** Engage in an inclusive process with the entire school community (particularly those systematically marginalized or lacking power in educational processes) to develop a vision of collective responsibility for the educational success of each student, regardless of background.

2. **Designing for Equity.** Acknowledge that most schools do not serve all students well and design the school to both disrupt that inequity and be responsive to the complex and evolving needs of the community.

3. **Teaching and Learning.** Steward a strong instructional culture and team rooted in a sense of shared responsibility for realizing the school’s vision for a thriving student experience.

4. **Reflective and Empathetic Practice.** Model a committed practice to both growing knowledge and fostering personal development and wellbeing in service of leadership for school transformation.

Then we will see the following changes in school-level conditions:

- Students have equitable access to strong instructional practices characterized by a responsive classroom culture, high expectations for student success, and grade-appropriate assignments and work.
- Quantifiable school-level outcomes, including student achievement, discipline rates, attendance rates, differential retention rates, and school climate measures, all shift in the positive direction.
- Staff, families, and community stakeholders are authentically engaged and invested in the school’s vision and feel a sense of belonging and purpose in the school community.

As a result of effective school leadership, all students develop strong learning mindsets (including a sense of belonging, sense of purpose, and growth mindset) and experience deep engagement and measurable learning.
Our Framework

This framework outlines the four key domains of effective principalship that lead to positive impact and shifts in school-level conditions. These domains are interconnected and when taken as a whole, illustrate transformative leadership. Additionally, we must flexibly leverage them in response to ever-changing school environments and leader needs.

Unified Vision

Effective principals engage the entire school community in an inclusive process to develop a vision of collective responsibility for the educational success of each student, regardless of background—and then undertake ongoing efforts to invest the entire school team and whole school community in achieving that vision.

- Develop a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the historical and current context of their school community and student experience.
- Engage every student and family as an authentic partner with real opportunities to shape the vision and student experience, and to have a legitimate role in decision-making.
- Proactively include school community members who may be part of systematically marginalized groups, underserved, or excluded from power in educational systems.
- Design and set a vision for a thriving student experience that deliberately identifies barriers that predict success or failure and actively disrupts those barriers.
- Invest all stakeholders in the vision where every student has access to strong outcomes associated with grade-appropriate assignments, strong instruction, deep engagement, and educators with high expectations, every day, in every class—regardless of their race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or any other aspect of their identity.
- Determine team and individual roles in realizing the vision and meeting school goals, and distribute leadership accordingly.
• Manage and respond to change by establishing a culture that is committed to continuous learning and iterative improvement.
• Cultivate an inclusive, compassionate, and trusting school culture that values the unique experiences and perspectives of all school community members.
• Take decisive action to ensure that school systems, structures, and relationships are aligned with the school’s vision and values.

**Designing for Equity**

Effective principals acknowledge that most schools do not serve all students well and design their schools to both disrupt systemic inequities and be responsive to the complex and evolving needs of the community.

• Establish an unwavering commitment to a collaborative process of working toward diversity, equity, and inclusion that is realized through everyday systems, structures, and actions of the team.
• Create and uphold conditions for psychological, physical, and emotional safety so that all school community members feel a sense of belonging and engage authentically.
• Understand how privilege, power, oppression, and racism operate—both historically and currently—in school and society.
• Build the capacity of others to examine their own identity, beliefs, and biases.
• Proactively seek and respond to diverse perspectives and make decisions transparently.
• Embed processes of inquiry into ongoing work to ensure continuous, systematic use of data and reflection for identifying and addressing school inequities.
• Allocate resources equitably to ensure every student gets what they need to thrive socially, emotionally, and intellectually.

**Teaching and Learning**

Effective principals steward a strong instructional culture rooted in a sense of shared responsibility for realizing the school’s vision for a thriving student experience.

• Build and maintain a rigorous instructional core by ensuring culturally responsive, rigorous instructional materials and curricular resources are supported and implemented across all classrooms.
• Ensure that all staff have appropriate support, professional learning experiences (1:1 coaching, small group, and whole group), and opportunities to grow, develop, and be effective in their roles.
• Communicate actionable feedback that is grounded in data.
• Ensure strong, collaborative teams by aligning talent and performance management (recruitment, selection, evaluation, differential retention) to the school-wide vision.
• Leverage timely, relevant data to track progress and measure clearly articulated, vision-aligned goals that inspire teams and drive clarity and accountability.
• Ensure every student and family receives accurate and accessible information about students’ progress toward grade-level standards and performance.
Reflective and Empathetic Practice
Effective principals model a commitment to both growing knowledge and fostering personal development and wellbeing in service of leadership for school transformation.

- Manage physical, mental, emotional, and social energy in order to sustain an effective leadership role.
- Strategically distribute leadership responsibilities among a wide variety of members of the school team to ensure sustainability in everyone's workload.
- Continually assess knowledge of the field, including research and promising practices, and actively work to build knowledge.
- Deliberately cultivate and model key mindsets of self-awareness, growth, learning, and responsibility for all students.
- Cultivate emotional intelligence and agility to effectively manage challenging situations.
- Engage in regular self-examination to deepen understanding of their own identities, values, assumptions, and biases, and how their role in the system might contribute to or support inequitable practices.
- Invest time in understanding each team member's experience and needs, modeling compassion and genuine care.
- Celebrate individual and collective successes in realizing progress and supporting the vision.