



**Public Education &  
Business Coalition**

The Time Is Now:

# Improving School Leadership

PUBLIC EDUCATION & BUSINESS COALITION  
NOVEMBER 2008

# Who We Are...

The Public Education & Business Coalition is a partnership of education, business and community leaders working together to support and encourage excellence in Colorado's public schools.

## Our Mission...

*"To cultivate excellence in public schools so that all students succeed in learning and in life."*

## What We Do...

The Public Education & Business Coalition (PEBC) is a nonprofit partnership of education and business leaders working to improve K-12 public education. The guiding principle driving our work is that all students will graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge to succeed in the 21st century. Our work is organized around two central areas of focus:

### Professional Development

We provide high-quality professional development that guides and supports K-12 teachers, school leaders, and district personnel as they implement research-based best practices that lead to student achievement.

### Policy and Business Engagement

We build public awareness and understanding of fundamental education issues, advocate for effective education policies, and mobilize the business community to support student achievement and positive, sustainable change in our schools.

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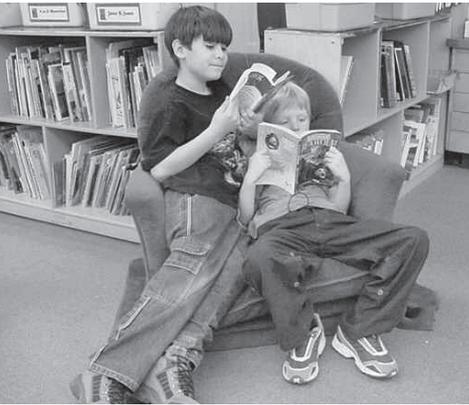
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# Executive Summary

*We believe the adaptive challenge of reinventing American public schools versus merely trying to reform them has profound implications for those who lead them. This challenge requires all adults to develop new skills – beginning with leaders at all levels – and to work in very different ways.*

Wagner & Keegan, 2006

In Colorado, as across the nation, our children need our schools to change. The advances of the last 20 years – in knowledge, in technology, in internationalization, in socialization, and in the economy – require that our schools transform themselves into learning organizations that are adapting to meet the needs of every child. Like any meaningful organizational change, this cannot happen without effective leadership.

The need for effective and inspired leadership has never been greater than it is now. School leaders are required to create structures and systems and authentic learning environments to prepare students for the 21st Century. Students need to learn not only core basic skills, but also technology literacy, problem-solving, global citizenship, and even “learning how to learn” as the speed at which content changes start to outpace schools’ ability to teach it ([www.21stcenturyskills.org](http://www.21stcenturyskills.org)). Students must also be autonomous, resilient, and hold a vision for their future. In addition, the content and skills that students need to succeed are rapidly evolving.

The expectations on school leaders have intensified and most likely will not subside. These shifting expectations require us to redefine the role of the principal. No longer can he or she be simply a manager of staff or tasks. Rather, the task for principals today is to lead for deep cultural change in their schools. In this publication, we at the Public Education & Business Coalition (PEBC) elaborate on this new conception of school leadership.

Effective leaders can make a profound difference in their students’ achievement. They must create school cultures

where people are motivated and feel committed to an organization that has meaning, values, and ennobling purpose (SCHEIN, 1985). Today’s school leaders must be:

- Transformational leaders who inspire and motivate others to aspire to greater goals than ever before.
- Change leaders who understand the dynamics of the change process.
- Distributive leaders who empower others in the building with leadership capacity.
- Leaders of learning organizations, creating attitudes supportive of continuous improvement and processes for constant learning and adaptation.

The PEBC formed a Leadership Task Force – comprised of national experts on principal coaching, retired highly successful principals, current principals, and PEBC leadership staff – to synthesize and extend the research base regarding effective leadership, codify our knowledge, and design resources for effective leadership.

Out of this work emerged the PEBC Leadership Framework, described below, which articulates a critical reframing of the principal’s role.

The PEBC believes that **the role of the school principal is to be the leader of a learning-focused culture in which students and staff achieve at high levels.**

This learning-focused culture is achieved through the following:

- **Academic Confidence** An effective school leader fosters a collective belief that her or his school will make a difference in the academic lives of students. Academic confidence consists of setting high expectations for students and staff and creating a positive learning culture in which teachers believe they are effective, both as individuals and as a school community.
- **Effective Communications** An effective school leader communicates in ways that are open, honest, timely,

and purposeful, because she understands that effective communication is the glue that holds together the responsibilities of leadership.

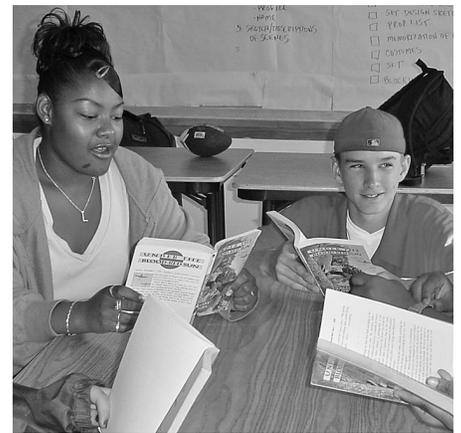
- **Equitable Relations** An effective school leader ensures that all members of the school community have a voice in shaping school culture and programs, and embraces the diverse needs, interests, and strengths of students, staff, and the larger community.
- **Collaborative Community** An effective school leader creates a collaborative community in which adults both inside and outside the school share responsibility for the academic, social, and emotional success of students. This shared sense of purpose and continuous learning is pervasive throughout and drives the work of the school.
- **Effective Organizational Structures** An effective school leader develops and manages organizational systems and processes that allow academic optimism, effective communications, equitable relations, and the collaborative community to flourish.

This framework provides a roadmap for school leaders. At the PEBC, we recognize that helping principals become more effective requires both strong professional development and supportive policy frameworks for school leadership at the national, state, and local levels. Intentional systemic support will build capacity in leaders who will shape sustainable school cultures.

PEBC's aim is to create and sustain truly exceptional schools. We provide professional development for principals in the form of leadership coaching, to help them build the competencies, skills, and confidence necessary to become the leader of a learning-focused culture. This leadership coaching, combined with teacher leadership training, and teacher professional development is central to PEBC's professional development model.

PEBC also calls on policy makers at the federal, state, and local levels to pass policies that help build and sustain the

type of leadership essential for a vital public school system. The school leaders of today must be highly competent in order to attain the goals our society has set for them, and



society must support them in their work. Sensible policies must do the following:

- Support the **recruitment** of exceptionally well-qualified individuals for the principalship, including individuals who have proven their leadership abilities in other fields;
- Provide effective **preparation** for principals that includes training in all of the components identified above, as well as significant field experience;
- Establish **school accountability** systems that help rather than hinder principals in their improvement efforts;
- Allow effective principals to exercise **greater autonomy** over the operations of their schools, including decisions about the hiring and firing of staff; and
- Improve the capacity of **district infrastructure** and invest in **district leaders** who will create the conditions necessary for exceptional school leadership.

Many of these changes are underway in Colorado, including CAP4K (Colorado Senate Bill 08-212). But what stands in the way of full implementation is the quality, skill, and support of leadership at the local level.

Leadership is key to schools' success. We must support our current and future school leaders – through strong professional development and sensible policies – so they can build the learning-focused cultures our students must have. ■

# Introduction

*The realities of today's economy demand not only a new set of skills but also that they be acquired by all students.*

Wagner & Keegan, 2006

The work of school leaders has changed dramatically. Leaders working in public schools today are being asked to do what no system has ever before accomplished: ensure that each child, every day, in every school, achieves at high levels intellectually, socially and emotionally. This goal has implications not only for the children and adults in our schools but also for our society at large. We are at a turning point in education; without strong schools, districts and systems we risk losing the education system on which our country was founded.

Our students need strong leaders. Today, just 74 percent of the students entering ninth-grade in Colorado schools will graduate from high school in four years. And the academic outcomes for students of color lag far behind. Whereas 80% of white students in Colorado graduate, only 65% of African American students do. The rates are an even lower 56% for our Latino students, who make up over a quarter of our student population (EPE RESEARCH CENTER "DIPLOMAS COUNT," 2008).

*The task for principals today is to lead for deep cultural change in their schools. If we want to bring about large-scale school improvement, we must build professional learning communities as the fulcrum.*

The graduation rates are appalling. Yet high school graduation is just the minimum of what students need to succeed in today's global economy. As the Partnership for 21st Century Skills notes, students need to learn not only core basic skills, but also technology literacy, problem-solving, global citizenship, and even "learning how to learn" as the speed at which content changes start to outpace schools' ability to teach it (WWW.21STCENTURYSKILLS.ORG).

Our principals need strong support. Today, the stakes

are high and the level of accountability of school leaders is unprecedented. The multifaceted nature of the job, the lack of systemic support, the limited number of professionals seeking this critical role and the high mobility rate all contribute to the distressing conditions currently experienced by school leaders.

Current approaches are not preparing principals to lead effectively. The school system is hemorrhaging leaders at an alarming rate. A study in Texas found that over half of schools experienced principal turnover between 2004-2007, with more than 60 percent of high schools losing their principals (UNIVERSITY COUNCIL FOR EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION, 2008). And though high-needs schools are in particular need of stable leadership, turnover rates at these schools are especially high: a recent study of Baltimore schools showed that more than 90 percent of schools experienced a change in leadership over a five-year period, more than 80 percent experienced two or more changes, and half of the schools saw three or more principals in five years (ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH, 2007).

Furthermore, even if principals stay, their job description has been outpaced by the job itself. Of course they still must be managers: balance school site budgets, know district policies, design the schedule, and maintain the facility. Yet more importantly, they must be organization developers: shaping a culture that ensures that staff and students do their best work, meet high external and internal standards for excellence, and are supported as communities of learners.

The task for principals today is to lead for deep cultural change in their schools. If we want to bring about large-scale school improvement, we must build professional learning communities as the fulcrum.

In this publication, we describe the context of current school leadership in K-12 public education, and present PEBC's Leadership Framework as an important way to reframe school leaders' work. We then describe how PEBC leadership coaches and staff developers support principals and teacher leaders, and address policy implications. ■

# Why Leadership Is Important

*Give me a lever long enough and I will change the world.*

Archimedes

*For sustainability, that lever is leadership.*

Fullan, 2003

Scores of studies have shown the importance of leadership to successful organizations (COLLINS, 2001; MAYO & NOHRIA 2005; GOLEMAN, 2000). Just as CEOs impact the performance of their organizations, principals affect the performance of their schools. Studies show that the quality of principal leadership is secondary only to the quality of the classroom teacher in affecting student outcomes, accounting for 25 percent of total school effects on student learning (LEITHWOOD ET AL. 2004).

The way in which effective leaders fulfill their role varies by person and organization. However, researchers have noted common themes to leadership roles in schools. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) place leadership roles in three main categories:

- Effective leaders **set directions** by articulating high expectations and developing shared visions and meanings.
- They **develop people** by providing intellectual stimulation and individualized support, and by encouraging leadership in multiple roles.
- They **develop the organization** by strengthening school culture and collaborative processes, and by successfully managing the external environment for the benefit of students

School leaders who are able to perform effectively in these roles often have certain cognitive and personal characteristics (Leithwood, et al., 2006).

- They tend to be better problem solvers, creative, and mentally flexible.
- They understand the content to be taught in their schools, and they know what good teaching is and how to help teachers develop in their teaching.
- They are outgoing, conscientious, curious, and honest.
- They are passionate, committed, and energetic.
- They are emotionally intelligent and able to understand and relate to the emotional states of others.
- They care deeply about their staff and take very seriously their responsibility to students

# PEBC's Leadership Framework

**W**e at the PEBC believe that the principal's role is to shape culture, not just manage people or tasks. One purpose of the PEBC Leadership Framework is to help principals see that this challenge, which may seem undoable, is in fact achievable. Research indicates that principals who believe that they can positively affect their schools (in other words, who show high self-efficacy) do in fact positively affect their schools (HOY ET AL. 2006).

In developing the Leadership Framework, members of the PEBC Leadership Task Force – including national experts on principal coaching, retired highly successful principals, current principals, and PEBC leadership staff – reviewed extensive research on school leadership. The group also examined several existing frameworks, outlined briefly below.

1. The Colorado Principal Standards (which provide mandatory content for every Colorado-based principal preparation program as established by the Colorado State Board of Education in 2003). These are comprehensive and a useful description of the principal's roles around accountability, compliance, and legal requirements; yet they do not emphasize the principal's role as visionary, instructional leader, and community-builder. (<http://unco.edu/cebs/elsp/principal>)

2. The Balanced Leadership Framework (developed by researchers at MCREL, 2003). This framework effectively captures the multiple responsibilities of a school leader, identifying 21 essential responsibilities; however, by listing so many responsibilities, the framework is a bit too unwieldy to provide principals with guidance in their daily work.

3. The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Educational Leadership Standards (which have been adopted by 43 states). The Task Force found these standards useful and accurate representations of what principals need to know and be able to do; yet this framework does not show the balance between the roles of managing organizational structures and creating a professional culture

focused on instruction and assessment.

(FOR DETAILS ON EACH OF THESE FRAMEWORKS, SEE APPENDICES A, B, AND C, RESPECTIVELY).

No one framework was comprehensive in nature to support the PEBC's vision of effective leadership. Therefore, PEBC developed our own five-part Leadership Framework, based on research, existing leadership standards, and PEBC's organizational values.

PEBC believes that the role of the principal and other school leaders is to create a learning-focused culture in which students and staff sustain high levels of success.

This learning-focused culture establishes:

- Academic confidence
- Effective communications
- Equitable relationships
- Collaborative communities
- Structures for sustainability

The term learning-focused culture describes what is at the heart of every successful school – an emphasis on learning at high levels for both students and staff. When learning is guided by high standards and clear goals and is supported by time, collaboration, and resources, staff and students alike will reach their highest potentials. No other outcome can be allowed to take precedence over the priority of creating a rigorous and supportive learning-focused culture within a school.

We discuss each component of the framework in turn, below. Yet the five are synergistic and must occur together if schools are to achieve the goal of educating all students well.

**Academic confidence** Academic confidence is the staff's ability to support students achieving at high levels socially, emotionally, and intellectually. Leaders with academic confidence build a shared structure of curriculum, instruction, and assessments that lead to tangible accomplishments; create a positive learning environment; are confident, enthusiastic,

hopeful, and curious about what is possible to achieve at their school; believe they can make a difference in the learning of all students and staff; and hold a vision for a shared sense of purpose. Academic confidence is based on the construct of “academic optimism” (HOY ET AL. 2006), which is defined by three organizational properties: academic emphasis of the school; the collective efficacy of the faculty; and the faculty’s trust in parents and students.

**Effective communication** Effective communication is explained by Jay P. Scribner et al. (1999) as the glue that holds together all other responsibilities of leadership. As such, it should be characterized explicitly and implicitly by a system that is open, honest, purposeful, and timely. Effective communicators are skillful listeners who pay attention to verbal and nonverbal messages. The term communication goes beyond one-on-one interactions to systems that support and include group interactions within the school and between the school and the community.

*Key in establishing collaborative communities is the development of collective responsibility for students succeeding intellectually, socially, and emotionally. Community members both challenge and support one another in meeting this collective responsibility.*

**Equitable relationships** Equitable relationships are those characterized by integrity, justice, fairness, and impartiality toward those involved. They set the direction for a school community committed to the establishment of meaningful interpersonal and trusting relationships. Bryk and Schneider (2004) contend that schools with a high degree of relational trust are far more likely to make the kinds of changes that help raise student achievement. When relationships are equitable, members of the school are treated in a respectful and responsive manner, and the diverse needs, interests, and strengths of students, staff, and community are honored.

**Collaborative communities** A collaborative community is one in which staff, students, parents, and the broader community work together to achieve shared goals. These communities are characterized by trust, shared norms and values, continuous reflection, and structures that enhance both student, staff, and parent learning (GARMSTON & WELLMAN, 1999). Key in establishing collaborative communities is the development of collective responsibility for students succeeding intellectually, socially, and emotionally. Community members both challenge and support one another in meeting this collective responsibility.

**Structures for sustainability** Sustainable structures are long-term systems, processes, and procedures that continue to support planning, renewal, and improvements. They include use of time, data-driven decision-making, internal accountability, safety and discipline, school operations, development and use of resources, intentional development of internal leadership capacity, and community decision-making. The purpose of these structures is to sustain academic confidence, effective communication, collaborative communities, and equitable relationships.

It is the work of the principal to promote all five of these components, each of which is essential and together form the foundation of a learning-focused culture. And one central aspect of PEBC’s work is to support principals and teacher leaders in this effort.

The PEBC is dedicated to improving student outcomes by supporting educators’ instructional and leadership practices. Principals are essential to the sustainability of this work.

We at PEBC believe that responding effectively to the urgent need for improved school leadership will take work on two fronts, described in the following two sections of this report:

1. Professional development for principals and school leaders
2. Supportive policy frameworks for school leadership at the national, state, and local levels

# PEBC Professional Development for Principals and School Leaders

PEBC provides two components of professional development for principals:

- Leadership Coaching: individualized support
- Shared Leadership with teacher leaders: capacity-building among staff

**Leadership Coaching** is a form of embedded professional development for principals. Systematic support from a leadership coach helps principals develop core skills and competencies over time. Principals who willingly embrace professional learning experiences, and know their strengths and where they need support, will coordinate more effectively with district leaders and in turn lead their staff with increased skill.

PEBC’s leadership coaching helps principals grow in their capacity to perform a wide range of responsibilities in the context of their own school. All coaching is tailored to individual principals’ strengths, interests and needs. In Table 1, below, we outline outcomes of leadership coaching and the benefits to the principal’s school community.

**Table 1: PEBC Leadership Coaching: Results for Leaders and Benefits to School Communities**

Results of Coaching	Benefits to the School Community
Create high functioning leadership teams	This process will build capacity in teacher leaders for collaborating with the principal on critical school-based initiatives.
Establish thoughtful structures to build relational trust in the community	This foundational trust will help staff members engage in learning focused dialogue.
Analyze data to understand the priority needs of the students	This skill in data analysis will help clarify vision and prioritize school goals.
Co-design a long-range strategic professional development plan to meet the diverse needs of adult learners	This will build commitment in staff to engage their intellectual interests, mediate their own thinking, and grow in their craft as both instructors and teacher leaders.

**Shared Leadership with Teacher Leaders** Central to PEBC’s Leadership Framework is the principal’s ability to collaborate with teacher leaders. This collaboration is the main way that a principal can distribute leadership amongst staff, build capacity in his or her building, and to strengthen a staff’s commitment to initiatives designed to improve student learning.

In all the schools we serve, the PEBC sends a team: a leadership coach and a staff developer. They work together to shepherd and support the school’s professional initiatives, in order to provide coordinated support to the principal and key staff members on a number of critical decisions in service of student learning. These will include:

- **Design meetings** Co-facilitating design meetings with the principal and key staff members to identify priority needs
- **Data analysis** Analyzing key data to shape the direction of the school-based initiative
- **Leadership Team** Supporting the principal in forming an Instructional Leadership Team to shepherd the work for sustainable change
- **Professional Learning Plan** Co-coaching and consulting on a vision to design a strategic professional learning plan over a two- to three-year period
- **Accountability** Co-creating accountability structures to measure progress and make mid-course corrections

The PEBC team (staff developer and leadership coach) builds capacity in principals and teacher leaders to create collegial communities where staff members feel honored, informed, and inspired, and where they engage in reflective practice to grow their skills and competencies as professionals. This intentional support leads to more resourceful teachers who develop a deep trust for each other, resulting in their ability to do the following:

- collaborate to achieve shared goals
- work side-by-side to improve their craft
- develop communication systems

In school cultures valuing collegiality and collaboration, there is a better climate for the social and professional exchange of ideas, the enhancement and spread of effective practices, and widespread professional problem solving (LITTLE, 1982; PETERSON AND BRIETZKE, 1994). The distinct and complementary sets of skills of the PEBC staff developer and leadership coach interlace to design sophisticated professional learning experiences to engage the intellect and interests of the teachers, and to foster a strong sense of collective efficacy in their ability to meet the needs of all of their students.

The coordinated steps, ongoing communication, and carefully crafted services of the leadership coach and staff developer have significant outcomes for building leaders, teachers, and students. In Table 2, at right, we describe these outcomes.



**Table 2: School Outcomes Based on Coordinated Support by PEBC Leadership Coach and Staff Developer**

<p><b>Principals will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increase their capacity as instructional, community, and visionary leaders</li> <li>• manage change</li> <li>• analyze data to identify priority needs</li> <li>• strategically plan professional learning experiences for staff</li> <li>• carefully monitor the progress of the school-based initiative</li> <li>• lead and facilitate meetings for staff and their instructional leadership team</li> <li>• coach, consult, collaborate with, and evaluate staff</li> <li>• shape culture by intentionally embedding rituals, routines, and traditions into the community</li> <li>• collaborate and coordinate with key district coordinators</li> </ul>
<p><b>Instructional Leadership Teams will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• form a collegial community to shepherd a school-based initiative</li> <li>• analyze student data and co-create a professional learning plan for their colleagues</li> <li>• facilitate professional learning experiences for their colleagues</li> <li>• create formative and summative assessments and systematic observational structures</li> <li>• establish communications systems to share the work of the community</li> <li>• manage resistance and conflict</li> </ul>
<p><b>Teachers will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use critical instructional practices with fidelity</li> <li>• believe in their ability to make a difference in student achievement</li> <li>• demonstrate instructional leadership</li> </ul>
<p><b>School staff will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• make data-driven decisions for continued improvement</li> <li>• collaborate for the purpose of improving student achievement</li> <li>• believe in their collective ability to make a difference in student achievement</li> </ul>
<p><b>Students will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improve reading comprehension and writing proficiency in a variety of contexts</li> <li>• reflect on their own thinking</li> <li>• take ownership of their learning</li> <li>• feel efficacious about their learning, peer relationships, and day-to-day expectations at school</li> </ul>

# Supporting School Leadership through Proactive Public Policies

Principals and schools do not operate in a vacuum. Their incentives and strategies are enhanced or constrained by the policy environment in which they operate. Creating and sustaining a vital public school system is a significant challenge that must be supported at the federal, state, and local policy levels.

The school leaders of today must be highly competent in order to attain the goals our society has set for them, and society must support them in their work.

PEBC calls on policy makers at the state and district levels to ensure that the policy framework fully supports what we know about effective school leadership and allows us to recruit, train, and retain effective school leaders. The specific policies, strategies, and actions required to support leadership may differ from district to district and between district and state, but in general should follow the guidelines discussed below.

## Recruitment

Policies should support the recruitment of exceptionally well-qualified individuals for the principalship, including individuals who have proven their leadership abilities in other fields. As a coalition of business and education leaders, PEBC knows that business has much to offer education, including the potential pool of talent for school leaders.

Fortunately, Colorado permits school districts to provide highly individualized alternative routes to the principalship for non-traditional candidates. PEBC urges districts to take advantage of this policy by aggressively recruiting promising principal candidates from businesses and non-profits as well as from the ranks of educators.

Districts also should consider forming partnerships with organizations that specialize in recruiting and training non-traditional principal candidates, such as groups like New Leaders for New Schools ([HTTP://WWW.NLMS.ORG/](http://www.nlms.org/)) or the Ritchie Program for School Leaders (based at the

University of Denver). Too often, districts – tending to be insular – try to reinvent the wheel by establishing their own leadership academies. This consumes precious resources and often proves inefficient. Outside providers with proven track records can perform the same functions more effectively and economically.

Of course, non-traditional principals who do not have a background in instruction cannot immediately serve as instructional leaders in their schools, but a school that already has sound instructional leadership from teacher leaders can benefit greatly from other leadership experience brought by a non-traditional principal.

*Creating and sustaining a vital public school system is a significant challenge that must be supported at the federal, state, and local policy levels.*

Another source of principal talent is the increasing numbers of teacher leaders. Districts can identify teacher leaders who show promise and help them find out more about what it means to be a principal. To prepare them for the rigors of the principalship, promising teacher leaders can be enrolled in a program like New Leaders for New Schools.

Since leadership “churn” is a huge problem for schools, districts should create proactive structures for ensuring a steady stream of high quality school leaders. Some districts have created “on-boarding” programs for staff interested in learning about the principalship; others have created differentiated roles for teachers as they progress in their careers.

## Preparation

Effective preparation for principals should include training in all of the components identified in PEBC’s Leadership Framework, as well as significant field experience.



Colorado's current Principal Standards (SEE APPENDIX A) are sound expressions of the various management roles principals must play. However, they are not explicit about the role of the principal as

transformational leader and change manager. The Colorado Department of Education should amend the Colorado Principal Standards to include the role of principals as leaders of dynamic and continuously improving cultures of learning, and our principal preparation and professional development programs should stress knowledge and skills in these areas.

To transform schools, we need to prepare school leaders in more effective ways. In many school districts, especially in urban settings, the bar has been set far too low. A principalship has been considered an entitlement for veteran teachers seeking an administrative position. This waning practice must end. The principalship must be a meritocracy. Only those candidates who successfully complete a rigorous course of training – like New Leaders for New Schools, KIPP's Fisher Fellowship, or Building Excellent Schools – should be put in charge of a school.

### Accountability Systems

School leaders face a dizzying array of accountability systems, from the federal No Child Left Behind Act to state accountability frameworks to district accreditation programs. These accountability systems need to help rather than hinder principals in their improvement efforts.

Such is not the case presently.

All accountability systems need some common components if they are to be effective in improving student achievement: they must be aligned in terms of the outcomes they expect; must recognize progress made with individual children over time; and must provide resources that allow leadership to work steadily towards improvement.

Ideally, an accountability system establishes student success as the overarching goal, but provides flexibility for individual schools to create their own path. Effective school leaders thrive when districts allow them to be autonomous and creative, within the clear boundaries of system goals. Schools that demonstrate success should receive additional freedoms that allow further innovation.

Denver Public Schools' new School Performance Framework can serve as a model that other districts and the state should emulate. The SPF provides incentives to high-performing schools and interventions for struggling schools. Top schools (as measured primarily by student growth over time) receive cash bonuses for staff, as well as increased autonomy. Struggling schools may receive additional, targeted resources as well as technical assistance from the district. Schools that fail to improve will be closed, and replaced by new schools, which in some cases may be charters.

Over time, as the state implements its Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K), similar systems could be rolled out in other districts across the state. CAP4K, which will take several years to fully implement, is based on these philosophical assumptions:

- 1) Education needs to be aligned from preschool into college;
- 2) Students need the same skills for college as they do for specialized training or going to work;

*(continued on page 12)*

*(continued from page 11)*

3) Student mastery of skills is more important than having certain classes listed on a transcript.

If and when the plan is fully implemented, there will be state content standards in every grade on a wide variety of subjects and skills, new forms of testing, state definitions of what it means both to be ready for school and ready for postsecondary education or work, specialized high school diplomas, updated graduation requirements in every school district and an easier path into state colleges for some high school grads.

The CAP4K framework is ambitious and far-reaching. Some observers fear that a partially-implemented overhaul of the state's accountability system could result in a bewildering muddle not significantly better than where we find ourselves today.

Policymakers and practitioners from the institutions involved in implementing CAP4K (state Board of Education and the Colorado Commission on Higher Education, CDE administrators, local school boards, and principals and teachers) must remain focused on the overwhelming implementation task. This means accelerating timetables, maintaining an unwavering determination to keep standards high, and refusing to cave in to pressure from interest groups to water down or substantively change portions of the plan.

If school leaders cannot meet goals, even when districts provide them with sufficient time and resources, the accountability system needs to respond in the interests of students. Districts need to close schools that are consistently underperforming and replace them with others that will better serve students. True innovation in service of students occurs at this intersection of control and autonomy (Feldman, 2007).

### **Control Over Staffing**

Principals need greater control over the operations of their schools, including decisions about the hiring and firing of staff. No business leader succeeds without authority over the organization's most important asset – its people. It is unlikely that a school can realize its vision if school leaders

lack the authority to hire people who are a good fit for the team, and to terminate those who are not.

Currently, district transfer and seniority policies require many principals to accept teachers they would not otherwise choose. Ultimately, students suffer. Lack of control over budgets and the inability to offer bonuses often prevent principals from attracting the kind of staff they need to serve their students' needs.

PEBC encourages districts and schools to take advantage of the freedoms offered by SB 130, the new Innovation Schools Act passed by the state legislature during the 2008 session. This law permits schools and districts to petition for waivers to state and local laws and regulations, as well as teacher union contracts that hamper innovative practices. In particular, the law allows innovation schools to circumvent the bureaucracy-laden hiring procedures imposed by the human resources departments of many school districts, and to go directly to the marketplace to seek the most qualified staff available. It also reduces the steps needed to remove incompetent teachers.

### **District Leadership**

Formal policies certainly impact school leaders' effectiveness. So, too, do a school district's informal policies and practices. District leaders are critical to the culture and success of their schools. They must be well-versed in leading change and inspiring staff to higher efforts, and in providing school leaders with the resources they need to succeed.

In addition, district leadership must realize that in order for principals to succeed with school-based change efforts, districts cannot overwhelm principals with multiple, simultaneous change directives. Districts can and should set the overall priorities for their schools and hold schools accountable for performance. Yet schools must be given the time and space to make their own improvements.

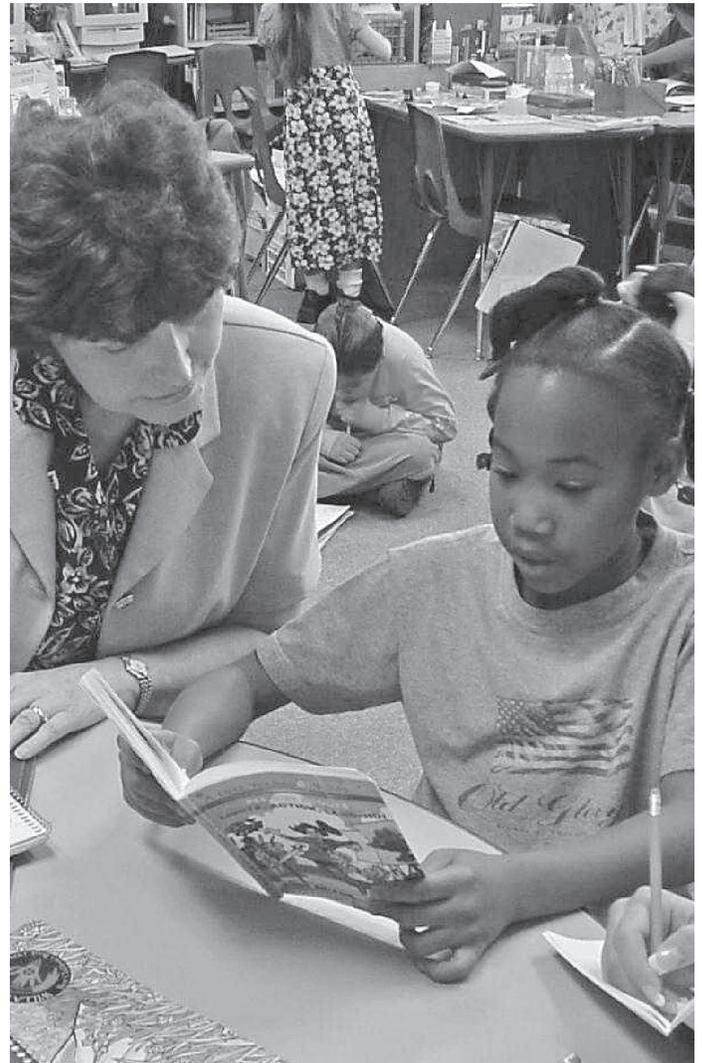
PEBC has found that school leaders relish opportunities to network with their peers. We urge districts to enact informal policies and practices so that principals can learn from one another through collaboration, shared study, and site visits. ■

# Conclusion

In schools that embrace norms of performance, change, and efficacy, staff gladly experiment with new approaches, seek innovative practices to solve enduring problems, and reinforce a learning-focused vision for the school (LITTLE, 1982; LOUIS AND MILES, 1990; DEAL AND PETERSON, 1990). Now, as never before, principals have the opportunity to lead their schools and work with teacher leaders to a new vision of success. Achieving this vision will require collaboration within school communities and partnerships with outside organizations.

*True innovation in service of students occurs at this intersection of control and autonomy.*

The pressures on school leaders are intensifying. The need for truly effective educational leadership is great. The time for improving our schools is now. PEBC leadership coaches and staff developers assist school leaders (both principals and teacher leaders) as they move forward on this path. The PEBC Leadership Framework serves as a structure on which to build a learning-focused culture in which the principal, the staff, and most importantly the students, achieve at high levels. ■



# Appendix A: Colorado's Principal Standards

**T**hese standards provide mandatory content for every Colorado-based principal preparation program. There are eleven standards, with 57 sub-descriptions of principal knowledge and skills.

## 6.01 Standard One: Foundations for Leadership

**The principal shall behave ethically and be knowledgeable about how to create an environment that encourages and develops responsibility, ethics, and citizenship, in self and others, and sets the direction for a school community committed to and focused on learning. The principal shall be able to:**

- 1.1 Endorse the role of the school within the community and in upholding the fundamental principles and perpetuation of our democratic republic.
- 1.2 Sustain and promote the conviction that education is the fundamental right of all students.
- 1.3 Accept personal and professional accountability for the educational processes of the school.
- 1.4 Consistently identify student achievement as the primary objective of the school.
- 1.5 Set high standards for the instruction of all students and for their academic achievement.
- 1.6 Recognize that the state's Model Content Standards represent the level of knowledge, skills, values, and abilities expected of all Colorado Students.
- 1.7 Exemplify a personal and professional commitment to ethical conduct and respect for others and their rights.
- 1.8 Invest in continuing self-education and collaboration with peers and others in the field, to assure that professional expertise is maintained to the highest levels and that there is continuing awareness of the latest information about child development, learning research, and applicable models of instruction.

## 6.02 Standard Two: Contextual Understanding

**The principal shall acknowledge, and address in planning, the internal and external factors affecting the school and the learning process. The principal shall be able to:**

- 2.1 Implement the requirements established for education by federal and state law, state rule and regulation, and local policy.
- 2.2 Convey respect for the roles of elected officials and administration.
- 2.3 Identify and include in planning the social, economic, and political factors which affect the educational process.
- 2.4 Recognize and address the challenges and strengths, including but not limited to those brought by students from a variety of backgrounds, cultures, communities, ethnicities, economic levels, current life situations and conditions, and varying degrees of linguistic skills.

## 6.03 Standard Three: Planning and Organization

**The principal is knowledgeable about the elements of planning; plan implementation; and organizational change, and time management. The principal shall be able to:**

- 3.1 Develop a plan for the school, with stakeholder involvement, which establishes a unifying statement of purpose with regard to meeting required standards for students, and which identifies:
  - 3.1.1 Instructional objectives,
  - 3.1.2 Assignments of responsibility,
  - 3.1.3 Timelines,
  - 3.1.4 Methods of evaluation,
  - 3.1.5 And which provides for the appropriate allocation of resources.

3.2 Implement, monitor, and assess the progress of the plan, at regular intervals, and provide for modification, as necessary.

3.3 Establish and adhere to timely, efficient, effective, and ethical administrative practices.

#### **6.04 Standard Four: Content Knowledge Instruction**

**The principal is knowledgeable about all requisite Colorado model content standards and knows and is able to demonstrate effective instructional and assessment methodologies and strategies. The principal shall be able to:**

4.1 Assist staff in establishing an effective schedule of instruction and an organized approach to providing students with required knowledge, skills, abilities, and understanding.

4.2 Supervise and support instruction, and assure that adequate and appropriate educational materials are available for the effective instruction of all students in the school.

4.3 Provide direction to teachers, with regard to the Colorado Model Content Standards.

4.4 Provide direction to teachers regarding the appropriate uses of technology in the classroom, including, but not limited to the reinforcement of instructional objectives; use as a resource for information; and in the management of student data. The principal shall:

- Communicate to staff about district technology policies, including matters of confidentiality, as related to the release and use of student records, and about appropriate student use of technology.
- Be able to demonstrate a variety of ways to integrate technology as a tool, into data-driven, standards-based individualized instruction, in support of student achievement.
- Inform teachers about how to incorporate

technology in the tracking of academic progress and in instructional record-keeping.

d. Utilize technology in managing and communicating information and data to a variety of stakeholders.

#### **6.05 Standard Five: Individualization of Instruction**

**The principal is knowledgeable about instruction, especially as related to the Colorado Model Content Standards and closing the achievement gap. The principal shall be able to:**

5.1 Exhibit vigilance with regard to the school's legal obligations and students' educational rights, including but not limited to, those requirements which affect special needs students.

5.2 Demonstrate the design and delivery of instruction, as based on individual students needs, so that each student can meet or exceed the standards.

5.3 Present teachers with a variety of teaching strategies which can assure students the ability to think critically, analyze, structure and solve problems, invent, memorize, and recall.

5.4 Provide teachers with a wide range of instructional methods and individual education techniques, which match the intellectual, emotional, physical, social levels and learning styles of all students in each classroom including those with physical or medical conditions, or educational disabilities; or those whose medication may have an effect on leaning and behavior; or those who are identified or recognized as gifted.

5.5 Inform teachers about assessments which provide proof of each student's academic progress.

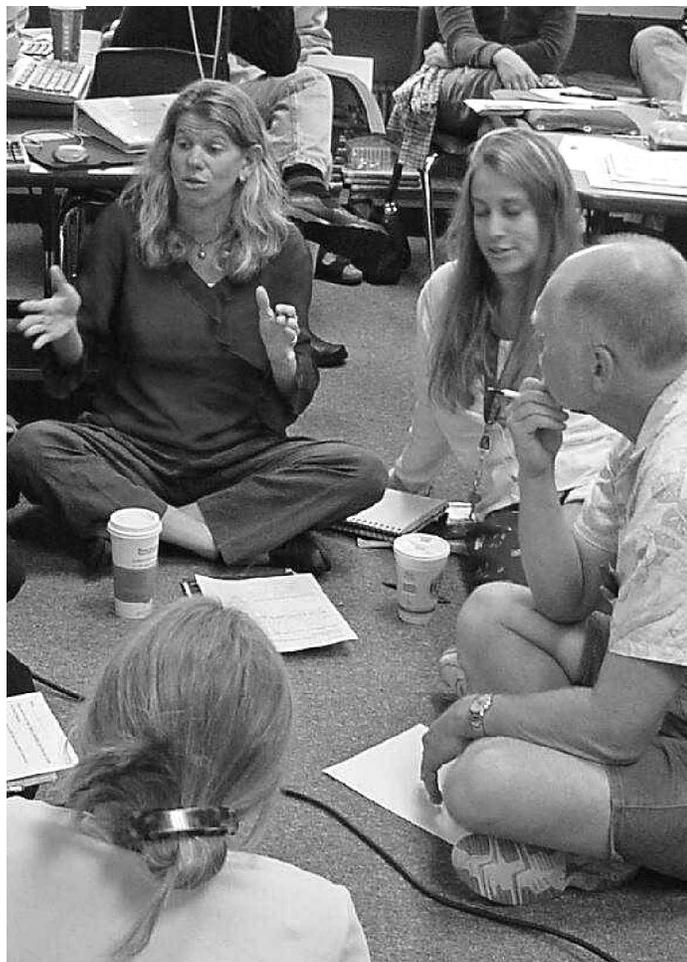
5.6 Maintain adequate and appropriate data regarding each student's academic progress; analyze and evaluate that data; and communicate the results to instructional staff for use in planning for individualized student instruction.

5.7 Identify a variety of strategies and to strongly advocate that teachers consistently provide students with examples of how the concepts, skills, and abilities being learned relate to the world of work and other aspects of everyday life.

### 6.06 Standard Six: Management and Evaluation of Instruction

**The principal is knowledgeable about the appraisal of instructors, as related to student learning. The principal shall be able to:**

- 6.1 Articulate clear performance objectives.
- 6.2 Observe and record the quality and effectiveness of classroom teaching and assessment and work with teachers to improve instruction.
- 6.3 Incorporate the requirements of Colorado law, relative to all the Colorado Model Content Standards and CSAP results, into the design of fair and consistently-applied performance evaluation requirements and procedures.



- 6.4 Maintain accurate records of formal evaluation observations, relevant student assessment data, and other pertinent information.
- 6.5 Regularly review teachers' competence, with particular focus on academic program delivery.
- 6.6 Provide mentoring and staff development in support of the instructional program, and the Colorado Model Content Standards, for all school staff and volunteers.
- 6.7 If necessary, resolve conflicts among, and refocus staff on, instructional objectives.

### 6.07 Standard Seven: Supervision of Personnel

**The principal is knowledgeable about national, state, and local district personnel policies. The principal shall be able to:**

- 7.1 Display and enforce professional standards in all personnel decisions.
- 7.2 Establish personnel recruitment and retention strategies based on the instructional plan for the school.
- 7.3 Implement, inform about, and adhere to ethical and fair hiring and personnel practices.
- 7.4 Provide clear communication of expectations.
- 7.5 Provide constructive performance appraisals, linked to student achievement.
- 7.6 Provide a documented justifiable basis for taking a personnel action.
- 7.7 Counsel out of the profession those whose continued presence in teaching does not serve in the best interest of students.
- 7.8 Provide encouragement to those interested in entering the field of education.

### 6.08 Standard Eight: Supervision of Student Conduct

**The principal is knowledgeable about the design of a positive learning environment focused on student achievement and characterized by appropriate and acceptable standards of student conduct and effective behavior management strategies. The principal shall be able to:**

- 8.1 Establish, with appropriate stakeholder involvement, a school and classroom code of acceptable conduct indicative of the responsibilities of students and reflective of school law and district policy.
- 8.2 Communicate the code and disciplinary procedures to staff, students, and parents and assist teachers in fair, appropriate, and consistent implementation.
- 8.3 Implement legal protections for students and appropriate and allowable suspension and expulsion policies and procedures.
- 8.4 Identify and develop positive relationships with community support services which can assist students and their families when there is a concern which cannot be addressed with the resource available to the school.

### 6.09 Standard Nine: Resources

**The principal is knowledgeable about the principles and practices for the fiscal management of schools or school districts. A principal should be an ethical business manager, responsible for the fiscal health of the school and entrepreneurial about locating non-state revenue sources to provide enhancements to the instructional process. A principal shall be able to:**

- 9.1 Manage and maintain a balanced school site budget in accordance with the principles of business management and the standards of good accounting practice.
- 9.2 Demonstrate knowledge of school district policies regarding methods of acquiring additional funding, and technical, or other forms of assistance, for specific purposes, in support of student instruction and achievement, and the ability to use a variety of strategies for attracting external funds and resources.

### 6.10 Standard Ten: School Site Safety and Maintenance

**The principal is knowledgeable about how to assure a safe learning environment in a secure, well-maintained facility. The principal shall be able to:**

- 10.1 Acknowledge the school's legal responsibilities to students on their way to and from school and with regard to transportation.

- 10.2 Be vigilant about school security and establish measures to evaluate and assure students and staff safety and anticipate potentially dangerous situations.
- 10.3 Implement safety procedures and precautions within the school and on school property.
- 10.4 Maintain a close working relationship with the local law enforcement.
- 10.5 Take a proactive approach to emergency situations and be prepared to provide stress and crisis management and conflict resolution, before, during, and after such situations, as required.
- 10.6 Understand the contribution of an attractive, inviting, and engaging school environment to an effective instructional program and implement supporting policies and actions.
- 10.7 Operate within district policies regarding general building maintenance, repairs, and improvements.

### 6.11 Standard Eleven: Parent and Community Involvement

**The principal shall be knowledgeable about effective communication, decision-making, and interpersonal problem-solving and conflict-resolution strategies. The principal shall be able to:**

- 11.1 Speak, write, and communicate successfully in a variety of settings.
- 11.2 To communicate about school policies, and data regarding student achievement expectations, and other pertinent information to parents and other interested members of the school community and general public.
- 11.3 Develop, maintain and encourage partnerships with, and involvement and volunteer opportunities for parents and the local school community.
  - 11.3.1 The support of student achievement
  - 11.3.2 Accountability
  - 11.3.3 Family literacy
  - 11.3.4 School-site decision-making
  - 11.3.5 Contextual and service learning

# Appendix B: Balanced Leadership Framework

Researchers at McREL summarized thirty years of leadership research and created the Balanced Leadership Framework. They identified 21 leadership responsibilities, which they found to have a significant effect on student achievement.

<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>The Extent to Which the Principal...</b>
Culture	Fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation
Order	Establishes a set of standard operating procedures and routines
Discipline	Protects teachers from influences and issues that would detract from their teaching time and focus
Resources	Provides teachers with materials and professional development necessary for the successful execution of their jobs
Curriculum, instruction, and assessment	Is directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices
Focus	Establishes clear goals and keeps those goals in the forefront of the school's attention
Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment	Is knowledgeable about current curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices
Visibility	Has quality contact and interaction time with teachers and students
Contingent rewards	Recognizes and rewards individual accomplishments
Communication	Establishes strong lines of communication with teachers and among students
Outreach	Is an advocate and spokesperson for the school to all stakeholders
Input	Involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies
Affirmation	Recognizes and celebrates school accomplishments and acknowledges school failures
Relationship	Demonstrates an awareness of the personal aspects of teachers and staff
Change agent	Is willing to and actively challenges the status quo
Optimizer	Inspires and leads new and challenging innovations
Ideals/beliefs	Communicates from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling
Monitors/evaluates	Monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning
Flexibility	Adapts his or her leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and is comfortable with dissent
Situational awareness	Is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school and uses this information to address current and potential problems
Intellectual stimulation	Ensures that faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices and makes discussion of these a regular aspect of the school's culture

## Appendix C: The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium

The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium reissued its standards (in 2008), which have been used as a model for states in creating their own standards for principal preparation and professional development. The 1996 standards were adopted in whole or in part by 43 states in developing their own principal leadership standards. Colorado has not yet adopted these standards. For the most part, the 2008 revisions eliminate clunky language and distill the descriptions of the specific functions to be accomplished in meeting each standard, while still covering the same areas as the 1996 standards did.

**Standard 1** An education leader promotes the success of every student by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders.

**Standard 2** An education leader promotes the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

**Standard 3** An education leader promotes the success of every student by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

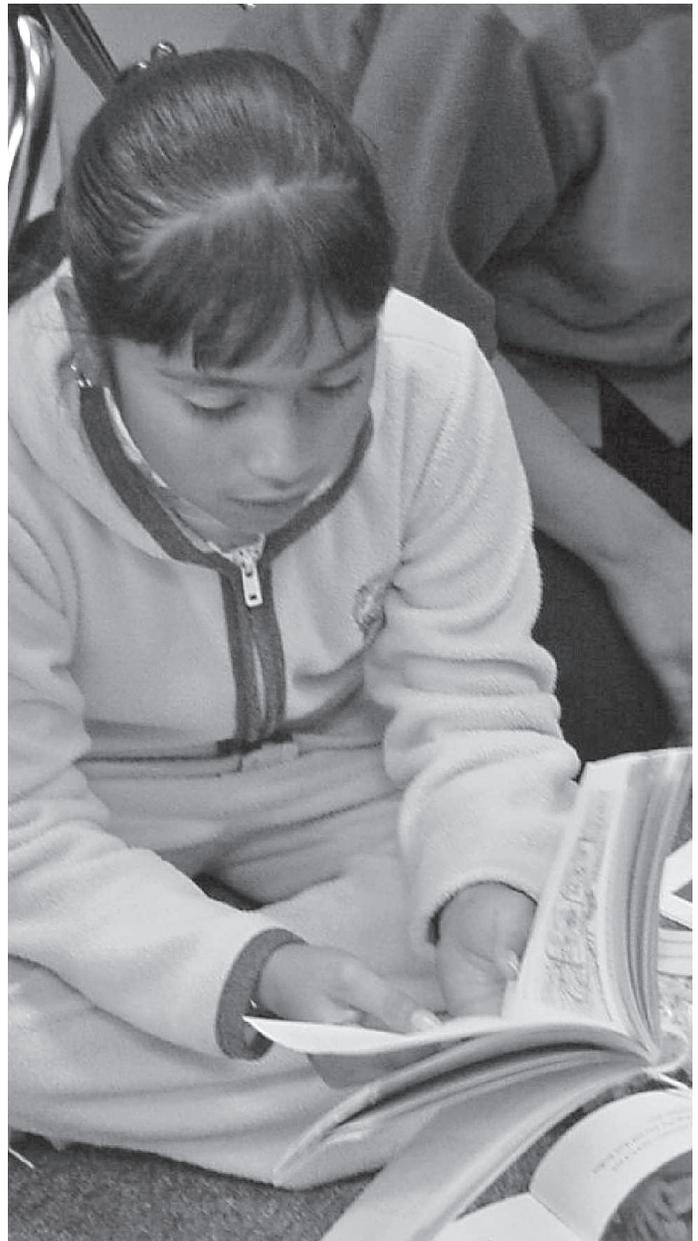
**Standard 4** An education leader promotes the success of every student by collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

**Standard 5** An education leader promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.

**Standard 6** An education leader promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and

influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

These standards provide clear signposts about the role of school leaders today. The fact that they are relatively new should give us pause about the gap between the leaders we have today and the leaders we need to meet the goals of tomorrow. ■



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