

The School Leadership Association: Six building blocks to maximizing impact



Foreword

At the heart of a school leadership association is the moral imperative of supporting school leaders to work with teachers targeting success for all students. However, the organization's role has become more and more problematic. The current concept of what school leadership associations should do is either confusing (What exactly should our vision be anyway?), too adversarial (What is being accomplished if we are outside the 'tent' of policy makers?), or impossible (How do we reach all those principal members, or how can we completely fulfill the increasingly demanding role of being their 'guide on the side'?).

The objective of the International Symposium held October 21-23, 2015, in Toronto, Canada was to initiate an informed dialogue among school leadership organizations from around the world facilitated by education thought leadership to look at how to 'talk the walk' of being both deliberately developmental and maximizing impact. Once again, in this second symposium in 2015, we looked to principal associations to play a leading role, continuing to position them as central players. This opportunity to recast the role of professional associations provides a substantially more powerful lead system learner role for associations that, as you will see, centers on fostering what Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullan, O.C. might call the professional capital of associations in highly specific ways. Herein we present not a one size fits all solution but a 'start where you are' framework that enables coherence in practice.

Our first International School Leadership Symposium in 2013, and the subsequent White Paper, *Preparing Principals and Developing School Leadership Associations for the 21st Century: Lessons from around the world*, reflected the opinions and input of participants. The report highlights six areas identified as specific to the work of professional associations: Moral Purpose, Professional Relationships, Sound Governance, Political Influence, Theory-Research-Practice and Professional Expertise of Members. Download a copy of the [2014 OPC International Symposium White Paper](#).

Building on the work of the symposium in 2013, one task of group activities at this 2015 symposium was to define aspects of these areas that we called "building blocks," namely the right drivers in action for school leadership associations to be effective. The core agenda for this symposium was initiated by the Ontario Principals' Council (OPC) with learning facilitated by two renowned education thought leaders: Steven Munby, CEO of Centre for British Teachers (CfBT) Education Trust and Mary-Jean Gallagher, Assistant Deputy Minister of the Student Achievement Division of the Ontario Ministry of Education. Michael Fullan also contributed a video prepared specifically for this symposium on *Strategies for Whole System Change*.

Keynote Speakers



A number of school leadership associations took part in this symposium to inform a global exchange and perspective. Participants included the following:

Australia

- Graeme Feeny, Board Member Australian Primary Principals' Association
- Fiona Forbes, National President Australian Special Education Principals' Association
- Rob Nairn, Executive Director Australian Secondary Principals' Association
- Sheree Vertigan, Director Principals Australia Institute Ltd.

Brazil

- Lisa Vincent, Administrative Team Member and College Counselor
Pan American School of Porto Alegre

Canada

- Dominic Beaudry, Education Director, Wikwemikong Board of Education
- Ken Bain, Executive Director, Canadian Association of School System Administrators
- Amy Coupal, Chief Executive Officer, Curriculum Services Canada
- Bruce Drewett, Director – Leadership Development and School Board Governance Branch,
Ontario Ministry of Education
- Cindy Finn, Directors of Student Services, Lester B. Pearson School Board, Quebec & President
Canadian Association of School System Administrators
- Mark Gibeault, Principal, First Nation Student Success Program
- Wayne Joudrie, Executive Director Public Council of Ontario Directors of Education
- Frank Kelly, Executive Director, Council of Ontario Directors of Education
- Warren Kennedy, Executive Director, Ontario Public Supervisory Officers' Association
- John Malloy, Interim Director, Toronto District School Board (Former Assistant Deputy Minister,
Ontario Ministry of Education)
- Kevin Reimer, President-Elect, British Columbia Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association
- Anita Sherwin-Hamer, Evaluations Director, Curriculum Services Canada

- Nadine Trépanier-Bisson, Directrice générale (Executive Director), Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes (ADFO)
- George Zegarac, Deputy Minister, Ontario Ministry of Education
- Ontario Principals' Council Representatives:
 - John Hamilton, Past-President
 - Kelly Kempel, President-Elect
 - Mary Linton, Vice-President
 - Larry O'Malley, Vice-President
 - Mary Edwards, Executive Member-at-Large
 - Linda Massey, Associate Director of Professional Learning
 - Ian McFarlane, Executive Director
 - Joanne Robinson, Director of Professional Learning
 - Brian Serafini, President
 - Steven Toffelmire, Executive Member-at-Large

Finland

- Ari Pokka, President, International Confederation of Principals & Principal, Schildt Upper Secondary School
- Peter Johnson, Vice-President, Finnish Association of Educational Directors and Experts

Italy

- Ezio Delfino, President, Dirigenti Scuole Autonome e Libere (DiSAL)
- Maria Cristina Mignatti, Education Advisor Dirigenti Scuole Autonome e Libere (DiSAL)

United Kingdom

- Leora Cruddas, Director of Policy, Association of School and College Leaders

United States

- Robyn Conrad Hansen, President, National Association of Elementary School Principals

International Discussions



Photo (Left to Right): Rob Nairn, Executive Director, Australian Secondary Principals' Association, with Peter Johnson, Vice-President, Finnish Association of Education Directors, Finland and Fiona Forbes, National President, Australian Special Education Principals' Association.

Photo (Left to Right): Maria Cristina Mignatti and Ezio Delfino from The Dirigenti Scuole Autonome e Libere (DiSAL.), Italy and Peter Johnson, Vice-President, Finnish Association of Education Directors, Finland.

Leora Cruddas, Director of Policy, Association of School and College Leaders, England with Anita Sherwin-Hamer, Evaluations Director and Amy Coupal, Chief Executive Officer.



Photo (Left to Right): Graeme Feeney, Board Member of the Australian Primary Principals' Association shaking hands with Sheree Vertigan, Director, Principals Australia Institute Ltd.

Executive Summary

The purpose of this second international symposium for leaders of principal organizations was to dialogue, debate and learn from each other with the purpose to

- explore key assumptions about what it means to be an effective school leadership association,
- identify optimal conditions for principal professional associations to create and continually develop core leadership capacities that best support principals in being co-learners with teachers focused on student achievement and
- brainstorm indicators for building blocks of a framework that maximizes the impact of school leaders and school leadership organizations.

The intent of activities was to reflect on collective realities (contexts) and define the right drivers in action for system support of leaders of learning. As a precursor to dialoguing about a coherence framework for school leadership associations, Steven Munby shared cross-cutting themes from the *Five Interesting Cities* research, released in November 2015. Mary-Jean Gallagher talked about dimensions of effective leadership, levels of learning and the role of leaders and their associations while making connections to her own experience as Assistant Deputy Minister and the historical evolution of the OPC. Michael Fullan’s research as well as presentations from Steven Munby and Mary-Jean Gallagher informed participants building on the baseline of the six core areas or “building blocks” of professional associations established in the first summit.

As a result of this symposium, participants drafted indicators of sustained coherence based on six building blocks for school leadership associations. The purpose of this coherence-making was to shift focus to a deliberatively developmental approach that informs priorities, strategies in action, progress, next steps that drive consistency and specificity outcomes across organizations and systems. This White Paper is about what school leadership associations can do to move forward from wherever they are at in their own context and unique continuum of development.

Synthesizing input and the lessons learned by organizational leaders from around the world, this unique symposium focused on developing a coherence framework including six building blocks and indicators characterized by three things:

1. Working from practice to theory, and refining shared knowledge by learning from each participant’s context and experience.
2. Identifying the conditions at the professional association and school leader levels that best facilitate co-learning focused on success for all students.
3. Establishing an association’s coherence making framework as a continuous evidence-based process of making and remaking meaning rooted in networked learning communities at work.

Ontario Principals' Council Representatives



John Hamilton, Past-President and Kelly Kempel, President-Elect.



Group Discussions: Ian McFarlane, Executive Director with Kelly Kempel, President-Elect and Mary Linton, Vice-President.



Brian Serafini, President (2015-16).



Dr. Joanne Robinson, Director of Professional Learning, Education Leadership Canada and CEO of International School Leadership.



Linda Massey, Associate Director of Professional Learning.

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Purposeful School Leadership Associations: Research lessons about leadership effectiveness

A school leadership association's role is about sustaining the student improvement agenda and developing other leaders. Our intention was to build on the first symposium of its kind in 2013, where the purpose was to dialogue as lead learners of organizations about the conditions that we needed to create for sustaining instructional leaders (and instructional processes) while maximizing the impact of maintaining focus on sustainability that becomes more deliberate and precise.

Before school leadership associations from around the world provided input about aspects and actions of six building blocks framework specific to school leadership associations, the intent was to build shared understandings about current research as a springboard to applied group work. In this section of the symposium White Paper, we provide an overview of research lessons about leadership effectiveness, including first a video communication from Michael Fullan followed by presentations from facilitators Steven Munby and Mary-Jean Gallagher.

Strategies for Whole System Change

How do lead learner organizations turn overload and fragmentation into focus and coherence? In Michael Fullan's recent book with Joanne Quinn entitled *Coherence: The right drivers in action for schools, districts, and systems*, they provide an action framework aligned to the following four right drivers:

Original Right Drivers	Right Drivers in Action
Systemness	Focusing Direction
Collaboration	Cultivating Collaborative Cultures
Pedagogy	Deepening Learning
Capacity Building for Results	Securing Accountability

- *Focusing direction* is systemness (the need to integrate what the system is doing).
- *Cultivating collaborative cultures* oversees individualism by producing strong groups and strong individuals.
- *Deepening learning*, which is founded on new pedagogical partnerships, is the driver for better outcomes using technology as the accelerator.
- Capacity for results is based on developing skills and competencies within the group that, in turn, serves as a basis for being self-responsible and accountable to the outside. The road to *securing accountability* is through developing capacity within the group that, in turn, interfaces with the external accountability system.

Fullan, M. & Quinn, J. (2016). *Coherence: The right drivers in action for schools, districts, and systems*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. p. x.

As stated in their book, “leaders must find the right combination of these four components to meet the varying needs of their context.” To support symposium participants in their thinking, Fullan provided an overview of four areas to be considered in leading by coherence: the role of school leaders, professional capital considerations, what he calls new pedagogies for deep learning and leading from the middle.

Role of School Leaders

In Fullan’s communication, prepared to address school leadership associations, he referenced three key considerations for repositioning the role of the school leader for yielding learning results that are wider, deeper and doable in conjunction with his recent publication, *The Principal: Three keys to maximizing impact*.

1. **Talk the Walk of a Lead Learner.** The principal’s role as “lead learner” is “to lead the school’s teachers in a process of learning to improve their teaching, while learning alongside them about what works and what doesn’t” (Fullan, 2014, p.55).

What Viviane Robinson’s research tells us is that there are five core leadership domains that have a significant effect on student achievement.

1. Establishing goals and expectations (0.42)
2. Resourcing strategically (0.31)
3. Ensuring quality teaching (0.42)
4. Leading teacher learning and development (0.84)
5. Ensuring an orderly and safe environment (0.27)

Fullan, M. (2014). *The Principal: Three keys to maximizing impact*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. p. 58.

While all five domains are important, the winning domain with the most significant factor — twice as powerful as any other — is leading teacher learning and development where the principal participates as a learner with teachers focused on learning as the work in moving a school forward.

2. **Be a System Player.** Why be a system player if a principal is focused on developing a very good school? High performing leaders engage outside of their school to cultivate and leverage the savvy of others in networks to improve their schools by accessing new ideas, practices and resources. Accessing the “outside” could mean looking for intra-district and learning beyond the district opportunities that build partnerships to improve results in their own schools.
3. **Become a Change Agent.** In brief, becoming a change agent means principals are focused on helping the group shape and reshape quality ideas as they build capacity and ownership. Instead of seeking consensus, this means developing change-agent skills such as inviting feedback from individuals and the group; and developing professional judgment through reflective, inquiry-based routines that sort out effective and ineffective practices.

Professional Capital

In his address, Michael Fullan referenced previous work with Andy Hargreaves about *Professional Capital: Transforming teaching in every school*. This view of the need for professional capital is derived from human, social and decisional capital. Human capital is about the quality of individual talent; social capital refers to the quality and quantity of interactions or social relationships among people that affects knowledge and information; and decisional capital gets at the development of professionalism to make “discretionary judgments” (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 88-93).

Referencing Carrie Leana’s research evidence, the most effective principals develop internal and external social capital. In practice, this means principals defining their roles as facilitators of teacher success and reflective practice: developing, selecting and connecting their people. What does a professional capital mindset look like? Six guidelines follow, as set out in *Professional Capital* (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 163-164), which include

1. Promote professional capital vigorously and courageously
2. Know your people: understand their culture
3. Secure leadership stability and sustainability
4. Beware of contrived collegiality
5. Reach out beyond your borders and
6. Be evidence-informed, not data-driven.

New Pedagogies for Deep Learning

This video also touched briefly on the need for deepening learning with new pedagogies that address the relationship and precision of pedagogy and technology, especially given that students (and possibly educators) are increasingly bored with traditional schooling. One such learning partnership is the New Pedagogies for Deep Learning (NPDL) currently working to collaboratively build knowledge and practice and support whole system transformation. Using pedagogy first as the driver to foster innovation and new learning outcomes, this development of new pedagogies and their link to deep learning outcomes is related to what Fullan referenced as the Six Cs: communication, critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, character and citizenship.

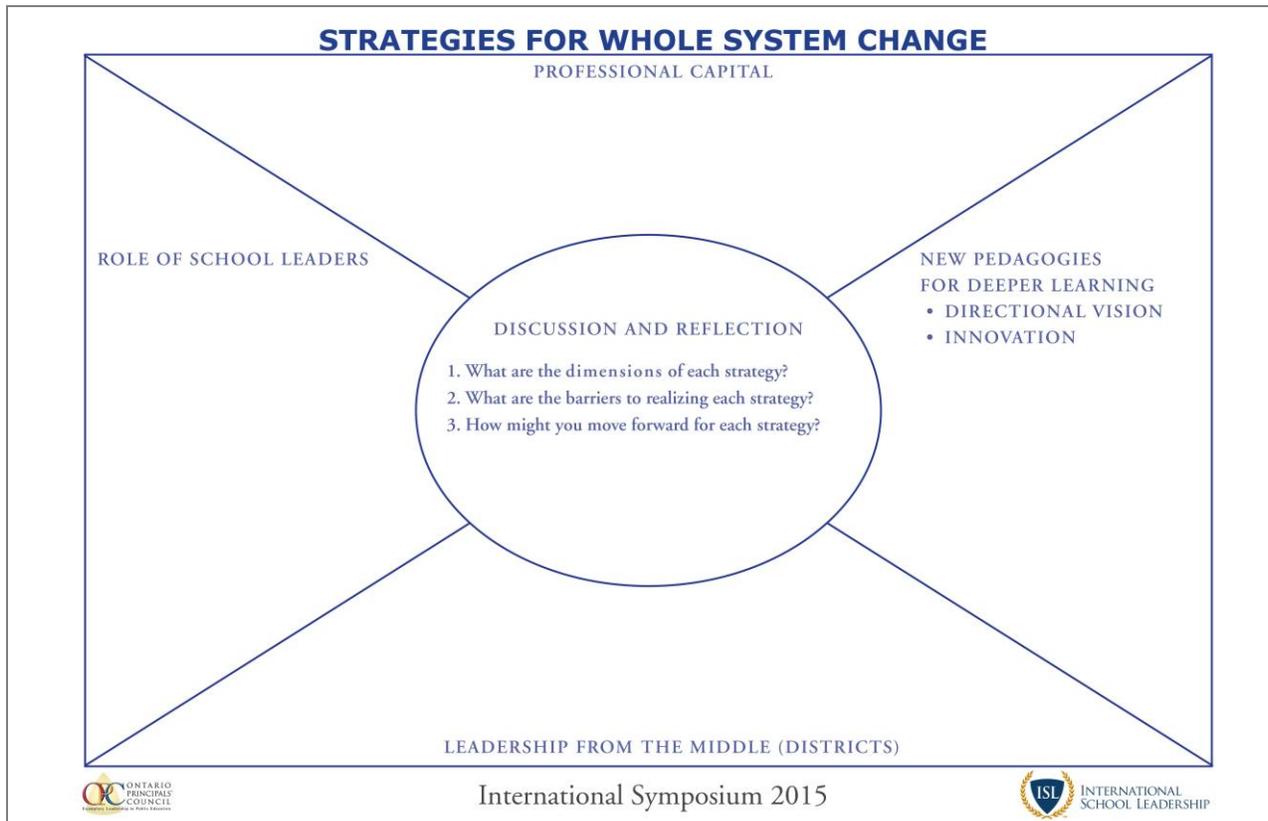
Leading from the Middle

What Fullan calls “leadership from the middle” (LFTM) is based on the idea of clusters of districts working and learning together on specific solutions and working together on coherence (Fullan, 2016, p. 9). This leading from the middle strategy can be a powerful force because clusters are working both within their own community while becoming a partner driving upward coherence to the state. Focus gets shaped and reshaped by interactive collaborative cultures working in greater focus and capacity.

School leader association representatives from around the world used the following place-mat template to apply Michael Fullan's "Strategies for Whole System Change."

For the summary of symposium table group feedback, see the website link:

[Strategies for Whole System Change](#)



Symposium Group Activity: School Leadership Association representatives from around the world used this template to apply Michael Fullan's "Strategies for Whole System Change."

Interesting Cities: Five approaches to urban school reform – Steven Munby

As a prelude to the release of the report on November 2, 2015 from the CfBT Education Trust, *Interesting Cities: Five approaches to urban school reform*, Steven Munby provided an overview of the connection between policy decisions and improved outcomes for education reform in London, New York, Dubai, Rio de Janeiro and Ho Chi Minh City. Although observations were made that untangling cause and effect is difficult and there is a consistent lack of robust trialling with no single blueprint for transformation, there were research lessons learned from the diversity of reform in these cities as well as from the cross-cutting themes. The following summary of themes can be referenced with more detail provided in the completed report available for download at www.cfbt.com.

Cross-Cutting Improvement Themes



Elwick, A. & McAleavy, T. (2015). *Interesting Cities: Five approaches to urban school reform*. Retrieved from www.cbft.com.

Although it is important to recognize the significance of context with each city having a unique story, Munby talked about key themes that connected different narratives. The analysis identified seven key themes that are

1. **Effective Leadership at All Levels**

There was a consistent pattern of education reform supported by committed political leadership. In several of the cities, inspirational educational leadership was provided by those in charge of the reform project at the city level. At school level, principals and other school leaders played a pivotal role in the practical implementation of reform.

2. **Data-Driven Reform**

The fuel for the engine of reform was, in several cases, reliable performance data. The existence of such data made it possible for the reformers to challenge underperformance and to identify the outlier schools where performance was exceptionally good.

3. **Building Coalitions for Change**

Although some reformers were more successful than others, all recognized the importance of an effective communications strategy. By building coalitions of different stakeholders, they sought to create momentum for change. In particular, the leaders in each city reached out to teachers, who were potential opponents of change and to parents, who had the potential to apply local pressure for change.

4. **Making Teaching a Career of Choice for Talented Young People**

The city reform projects often involved a new teacher recruitment strategy. While it is possible to make significant incremental progress by training the existing workforce, it is much easier to make transformational “step change” progress if the fundamental calibre of the teacher workforce is improved.

5. Combining High Accountability with High Levels of Professional Support

Without exception, the reformers sought to make professionals more accountable for their work. This was done in different ways, including school inspection, teacher performance management and the publication of student test results. In every case, there was also recognition that accountability was not enough; teachers also needed access to high quality support through, for example, the provision of better resources and better training.

6. New Forms of Government School Provision

In several of the cities, new types of government school provision were established as part of the reform agenda. These new schools were typically established in high-poverty areas to specifically target disadvantaged areas with variables such as improved facilities and learning resources, better quality teachers and an extended school day.

7. An Emphasis on School-to-School Collaboration

The reformers often sought to strike a balance between creating momentum for change through competition, while at the same time making possible different forms of collaboration across schools. There was, in particular, a tendency to link together high-performing and low-performing schools in order to close the gap in learning outcomes.

The Genius of Leadership

Steven Munby cited three aspects of what he called “the genius of leadership” including

- **Developing the right strategy for the context.** It is important to recognize the significance of context. Success is not a matter of working your way through components of instructional leadership or the components of a framework. You have to have a deep understanding of the eco-system. And while navigating uncharted waters, it is important to adapt to the winds of change and learning as you work with steady or extra sails, in calm or stormy weather.
- **Putting in place the right systems and processes to ensure consistency and delivery.** Putting in place the right systems and processes to ensure consistency and delivery can mean many things depending on your context. This could mean careful consideration of building common knowledge and shared understandings up front about what is meant by terms such as “lead learner” with a few priorities, ensuring cycles of collaborative enquiry become routines tied to evidence of impact on student outcomes and instructional leadership, jointly designing and assessing (and re-assessing) capacity for collaborative learning structures and process. Sir Michael Barber suggests that effective reform requires attention to the detail of implementation.
- **Seeing it through and taking people with you.** Finally, the “genius of leadership” also means “deep persistence” for the long haul. The leaders in the case study cities from around the world “each had a good plan and they stuck to it. In several of the case studies the persistence has continued over decades and this relentless approach appears to be paying dividends” (Elwick & McAleavy, 2015 p. 104). Joint collaborative processes fostered collective ownership and processes among key stakeholders.

“What makes the key difference isn’t innovation it is routines.”
— Sir Michael Barber

Leadership And Collaboration Across An Education System: Some lessons learned from England

– Steven Munby

Steven Munby also shared lessons learned from his earlier experience working as Chief Executive of the National College for School Leaders in England from 2005-2012 and from his current role as Chief Executive of CfBT Education Trust.

The Price of School Autonomy and High Accountability Without Capacity Building, Investment in Leadership Development

School autonomy and high accountability without capacity building and investment in leadership development can lead to four challenges.

1. **Isolationism.** Schools can become closed and insular — either due to over-confidence or due to insecurity or just because they are too busy.
2. **Competition.** There may be a tendency for schools to compete so they are less likely to share and collaborate and to learn from each other.
3. **Variability.** Those with capacity and advantage tend to get better while those without capacity get stuck, creating a bigger gap between good and not so good schools.
4. **Leadership Supply Issues.** Leadership roles, especially the role of principal, are not as attractive (especially in fragile schools) and those who do step up are unlikely to have had exposure to outstanding practice in different contexts.

A Self-Improving System: What Does It Take?

Lessons learned on creating self-improving systems included

- **Strong Leadership at All Levels.** Strong leadership at all levels means working toward a shared commitment from all those in leadership roles—including government—for capacity building and support as well as for accountability.
- **Collective Responsibility for Outcomes.** Collective responsibility for outcomes meant that outcomes were transparent and public across a locality or cluster: a clear focus on impact and on outcomes; a culture shift from ‘my school’ to ‘our schools’ that results in “national accountability plus.”
- **Effective, Constructive Use of Data.** Confront issues head on and talk honestly about the challenges as well as the great practice.
- **Engagement in Research and “Joint Practice Development”.** Engagement in research and joint practice development is about teachers and leadership learning and improving together with practitioner led professional development. Practitioner-led leadership development is also valuable in conjunction with national standards, robust quality assurance and refreshment of input and materials (with external diversity related to points of view).

- **A Collaborative Approach to Leadership Development and Succession Planning.** There needs to be much more of a collaborative approach to leadership development and succession planning at both the local and cluster of schools level to ensure capacity building that enables a self-improving system.
- **Professional Generosity, Reciprocity and Collective Moral Purpose.** An inclusive approach is crucial so that school leaders are not left isolated.
- **Joint Accountability.** Last but not least, robust peer scrutiny and review also go a long way in contributing to a self-improving system.

The Leadership Role of Professional Associations

Steven Munby also talked about some of the lessons learned from England in the context of the leadership role of professional associations. Lessons learned from the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) and the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) suggested that it may be easy to please members by attacking the government, but if you do, it is hard to influence the government in the future as a collaborative partner serving the interests of school leaders in the service of the moral imperative of increasing success for all students. Having lots of different professional associations can make it challenging to get alignment. Creative problem-solving and proactive proposals can also be significant with examples cited as “The Blueprint,” “Aspire” and “Leadership Foundation.”

A paradigm shift may be needed to move from characteristics of what Munby called the “Old” Professional Association to the following qualities of the “New” Professional Association. As a school leadership association, what is your approach? In which areas could you improve and what actions could you take for ongoing improvement?

Shifting Mind-Sets

OLD PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION

- Protecting Terms and Conditions... and Resisting Unsettling Change
- Perceived as “Enemies of Progress”
- Short-Term Interests of Adults
- Part of the Problem
- Terms and Conditions
- “We are not going to do this.”
- Modelling Confrontational Leadership
- Looking to the Past
- Blaming Others
- Compulsion and Shouting



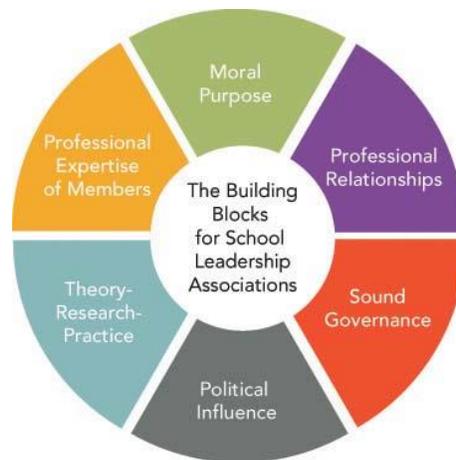
NEW PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION

- Improving Status of Education and Outcomes for Students
- Perceived as Agents of Change
- Interests of Children and Adults
- Part of the Solution
- Proactive, Problem-Solving, Generating Solutions
- Professional Responsibilities – Setting High Standards
- “How do we do this in a way that is manageable and good for the students?”
- Modelling Good Professional Leadership
- Shaping the Future
- Sharing Responsibility
- Persuasion and Voice

Steven Munby PowerPoint (2015)– Shifting Mind-Sets

The Building Blocks Framework for School Leadership Associations Approach – Mary-Jean Gallagher

What is our system reality (school leadership association context) in relation to these six building blocks? The aim of this activity was for each table group to take the lead on a building block to develop a framework that could be used to assess where a professional association is at while defining vision, actions and continued growth considerations. Mary-Jean Gallagher’s facilitation of symposium participants’ input challenged us to consider the key role that professional associations can play in supporting education reform agendas.



The Building Blocks for School Leadership Associations

Our focus was on coherence making with the goal of helping others — each other’s jurisdictions and other associations around the world — with continuous improvement. One crucial point of clarification is this: we do not propose any formula for success in simply working your way step by step through any framework. Even though the draft *Building Blocks Framework for School Leadership Associations* in the Appendix of this White Paper is not intended as a universal roadmap, we hope to support clarification around professional association competencies for whole system improvement.

Moral Purpose

For symposium participants, achieving excellence as school leadership associations begins with creating a moral purpose and shared vision at the ground level. Other moral purpose considerations were building professional capital, securing accountability and communicating the shared vision. In practice, this takes the subject of moral leadership to the next level by showing how to put change into practice at the school leadership association level.

See the Appendix of this White Paper for the *Building Blocks Framework for School Leadership Associations*

Creating a Moral Purpose and Shared Vision

School Leadership Associations

- build shared beliefs and understandings that all students can achieve success as the moral imperative of all stakeholders
- develop focus around a central improvement strategy including lead learners’ views of what, over a specified time, will have the greatest impact on improving system performance for children

- determine two or three ambitious goals essential to attaining the vision (the central improvement strategy — what learning do we need for our students?)
- identify a strategy for achieving goals including the supports needed
- practice vigilant about reducing and removing distracters and maintaining focus

Building Professional Capital

School Leadership Associations

- model lead learning and co-learn alongside peers, members and stakeholders
- engage all members and stakeholders to develop meaning over time
- develop new skills (capacities) with others to increase clarity, commitment and purposeful interaction for all schools to improve learning for all students
- grow and employ collaborative cultures (e.g., inquiry-based peer learning strategies, job shadowing, mentoring and coaching for staff development and customized education study tours)

Securing Accountability

School Leadership Associations

- establish a culture where all principals are expected to be continuous learners, co-learning with teachers and modeling this same commitment as an association
- model participation as a learner to help move the association, lead learners and schools forward
- involve school leaders in developing ownership and new capacities
- integrate opportunities to check progress with all members and stakeholders over time. (What is going well? What do we need to take action on?)

Moral Imperative as Strategy “Leaders with moral purpose... have a different content — deep commitment to raising the bar and closing the gap for all students.” “So the question is not just how deep is your moral imperative, but equally, what is your strategy to enact it?”
(Source: *The Moral Imperative Realized* by Michael Fullan, p. 3-4)

Communicating the Shared Vision

School Leadership Associations

- give members and all stakeholders experiences that demonstrate the integration of the goals and strategy
- reiterate the direction constantly and show how well you are progressing related to the specific vision, goals and the moral imperative

Professional Relationships

Developing collaborative cultures requires the second building block of Professional Relationships. Cultivating reciprocal support relationships were drilled down to special focus on creating professional learning networks with specific characteristics. Although capacity building may be considered foundational to all building blocks, discussion centred on aspects of capacity and accountability related to building professional relationships.

Collaborative Cultures

School Leadership Associations

- develop collaborative cultures as a core strategy focused on instructional leadership including within the association, within school collaboration, cross-school and cross-district collaboration and external partnerships (e.g., with other school leadership associations)
- build and support relationships by connecting educators and districts across the association to one another, to high quality information resources and professional learning supports
- cultivate collaborative cultures where aspiring and experienced school leaders continuously develop instructional leadership capacities

Professional Learning Networks

School Leadership Associations

- create professional learning networks based on school leader, association needs and goals and refine networking strategies with evidence of impact
- model professionalism that permeates relationships and decisions for propelling the learning agenda
- develop active learning partnerships that have the potential to create meaningful learning locally, nationally and globally and increase school leadership engagement

Capacity and Accountability

School Leadership Associations

- mobilize meaningful joint work and learning from that work
- use and advocate for transparent and non-punitive accountability approaches
- develop relationships, shared understanding and mutual accountability across the association and across schools, districts and with global partners (e.g., school leadership associations)

Sound Governance

The concept of “sound governance” was defined under four dimensions: legitimacy and voice, direction, performance and accountability. Aspects of legitimacy and voice cross-referenced other building blocks such as moral purpose, facilitating learning networks in practice, and building professional relationships. Direction involved creating strategic vision while performance indicators linked to responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency. Accountability denoted the role of leading in conjunction with creating the conditions for internal accountability and creating ownership of goals and actions with transparent communications and processes.

Legitimacy and Voice

School Leadership Associations

- share a moral purpose and facilitate pathways for attaining the moral imperative realized of deep learning for all children regardless of background or circumstance
- facilitate learning networks in practice with input in decision-making that represents goals and strategic vision for enabling school and system leadership development
- build professional relationships, consensus orientation and divert distracters around shared understandings with all stakeholders

Direction

School Leadership Associations

- create focus with a few specific goals based on input from members and stakeholders on “lead learner-ship,” along with a sense of what is needed for school and system leadership development
- increase shared understandings of the cultural and social complexities to build and influence capacity building
- review the strategic vision on an ongoing basis and adjust goals and actions to maximize impact on school leadership capacity to increase student outcomes

Performance

School Leadership Associations

- build positive partnerships and positive relationships with all stakeholders in the service of principals creating conditions that increase the moral imperative realized of increasing achievement for all students
- cultivate the right mind-set for action around learning as the work — respecting what we know about effective change processes to shape and reshape impactful instructional leadership practices while building capacity and ownership among all stakeholders

Accountability

School Leadership Associations

- create transparent communications and processes so that goals and actions related to strategic vision are accessible with enough information provided to understand and monitor impact on student improvement (while enhancing clarity around the role of the school leadership association)
- lead with creating the conditions for internal accountability around building a collaborative culture that combined individual responsibility, collective expectations and corrective action
- follow internal accountability practices with external accountability through transparency, monitoring and selective intervention that aligns with societal expectations and requirements

Political Influence

Political influence in this context refers to both internal and external accountability considerations that move beyond differences of opinion toward shared priorities and goals in the service of increasing success for all students. Informed as well by the *Coherence* research from Michael Fullan and Joanne Quinn and shaped by the lens of lead learner associations in practice, this means leading with creating the conditions for internal accountability to achieve greater external accountability. Engaging and participating in the external policy and accountability system means taking the “state” vision seriously while “moving unproductive compliance to the side of the plate” (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p. 124).

Internal Accountability

School Leadership Associations

- lead with creating the conditions for internal accountability to achieve greater external accountability
- model personal, professional and collective responsibility for continuous improvement and success for all students
- build shared understandings about the meaning of “effective accountability” as “accountability for student learning” (e.g., de-privatizing administrator practice, monitoring the moral imperative of having every student learn)
- cultivate a collaborative culture that combines individual responsibility, collective expectations, and corrective action (internal accountability)

External Accountability

School Leadership Associations

With strong internal accountability as the context, the external accountability role of school leadership then includes

- establishing and promoting evidence-based instructional leadership and professional standards and practices
- being accountable as lead learning partners so stakeholders and the community know what the association is doing and can see what is changing for lead learners and students as a result
- “talking the walk” so that all leaders at all levels can clearly describe the vision, goals, actions, evidence of the school leadership association and lead learners’ role in the student achievement agenda
- engaging and participating in the external policy and accountability system by taking the “state” vision seriously while “moving unproductive compliance to the side of the plate” (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p. 124); tracking progress relative to stage goals; being active in networks; presenting at regional, state conferences, and contributing to the overall system as a collaborative partner
- adopting and applying indicators of organizational health as a context for creating optimal conditions for school leader best practices (e.g., leadership turnover rates, well-being, instructional leadership); in addition to multiple outcomes measures for students (e.g., well-being, student sense of control for learning, levels of engagement in learning, etc.)

Theory-Research-Practice

An effective school leadership association is informed by work on research and practice. In fact, participants felt that practice could be informed by research and vice versa. As a school leadership association, theory-research-practice was considered under the headings: practice ↔ research, orientation to continuous improvement and fostering cycles of innovation.

Practice ↔ Research

School Leadership Associations

- foster a common language, knowledge base, and set of practices about quality learning and instructional leadership (lead learner-ship)
- build knowledge from research combined with best practice in context
- ensure lead learners have the skills and resources to apply knowledge
- use success criteria and evidence to determine the effectiveness of frameworks and professional learning related to student learning

Orientation to Continuous Improvement

School Leadership Associations

- mobilize a bias for innovation and a culture of learning for all by becoming both learners and reflective doers focused on continuous improvement and innovation simultaneously
- identify core strategies and consistent support to build expertise
- spread best instructional practices and ideas continuously to achieve goals across the system
- integrate cyclical review of vision, goals and actions to assess what is working, what needs to change (and why) and measure impact on students

Fostering Cycles of Innovation

School Leadership Associations

- develop deep learning competencies by consistently building precision in lead learner practices and clarity around learning goals
- connect and diffuse talent, expertise and best instructional leadership practices
- synthesize learning from the innovation
- facilitate communication pathways within the organization and externally with all stakeholders
- celebrate each step of an evolving learning journey

Professional Expertise of Members

Professional expertise of members is associated with cultivating a common knowledge and skills base; collective capacity building and inquiry habits of mind. Foundational aspects of cultivating a common knowledge and skills base include being able to link the analysis of data to meeting identified needs. The role of collective capacity building means that improving instructional leadership and learning practices are at the heart of capacity building strategies. Facilitating inquiry habits of mind processes mean focus on evidence about what works and what needs to be done differently to affect lead learner-ship and student outcomes.

Common Knowledge and Skills Base

School Leadership Associations

- cultivate a common knowledge and skills base across all leaders and educators in the system about the role of lead learners, instructional leadership development and impact on student outcomes
- link the analysis of data to designing more precise pedagogy to meet identified needs
- focus on effective learning design approaches that have greater, consistent impact on student learning (e.g., structured PLCs, mentoring and coaching, job shadowing, networked learning communities, etc.)

Collective Capacity Building

School Leadership Associations

- improve instructional leadership and learning practices as the heart of the capacity building strategy
- provide access to models of effective practice and opportunities to share with aspiring and experienced school leaders, all stakeholders
- create a stream of successive development opportunities for ongoing aspiring and experienced school leadership development
- provide opportunities for members to use new skills and knowledge in their roles and get feedback from peers or coaches as they practice

Inquiry Habits of Mind

School Leadership Associations

- use data to diagnose learning needs and develop precision in instructional practices
- facilitate processes that build collaborative inquiry into what works and what is needed to refine the approach
- integrate learning cycle routes focused on new learning, job-embedded application, reflection and dialogue with colleagues
- provide opportunities for sustained application and collaborative work focused on new learning including identified needs
- repeat cycles of collaborative design, lead learning and reflection to build understanding, skill and commitment toward a systemic and sustained approach

The Framework: Putting knowledge into action

Purpose of the Framework

If the key to school leadership associations creating the conditions for principals to work with teachers focused on student achievement lies in building the capacity of our own system leadership practice, how can we put that knowledge into action? What vision, priorities and processes do we need to put into place to completely fulfill the role of being our members' "guide on the side"? What skills and knowledge do our organizations and lead learners need to develop as co-learners? What do these core leadership competencies as building blocks look like in practice for associations?

The purpose of the *Building Blocks Framework for School Leadership Associations* is to

- facilitate a shared vision of leadership in school leadership associations
- identify the practices and actions of effective lead learner organizations
- promote a common language that fosters transparency and communications between members and an organization and what it means to be a school leadership association and
- guide the design and implementation of the six building blocks in practice including moral purpose, sound governance, theory-research-practice, professional relationships, professional expertise of members and political influence.

This draft framework is intended to provide professional associations with a tool for self-reflection and self-assessment, and to serve as a springboard for dialogue about purposeful leadership and action planning. This framework is not intended to be a roadmap. It is important to emphasize and recognize the unique culture and context including regional differences. Nor is this document meant to be used by the selected few behind closed doors without the feedback and input of members that will support the continued growth of an association from shared professional, social and decisional capital. One more cautionary point about leading by coherence, in the words of Michael Fullan: "you never arrive once and for all, nor should you want to... coherence making in other words is a continuous process of making and remaking meaning in your own mind and in your culture" (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p. 2-3).

Organization of the Framework

The framework includes six core school leadership capacities from the initial International Symposium in 2013: Moral Purpose, Professional Relationships, Sound Governance, Political Influence, Theory-Research-Practice and Professional Expertise of Members. Participants in this second International Symposium worked in table groups to list indicators and actions that best characterize each of the six building block sections of the framework. Indicators are intended to clarify the overall building block category as sub-headings — as “guide-posts” to provide an indication of aspects of the particular building block (section) focus. Indicators are not proof and are not meant to tell us why or how a Building Block has made a difference. Sample actions are provided for each indicator to support shared understandings and vision around what it means to be an effective school leadership association.

Applying the Framework in Diverse Contexts

Effective school leadership associations must be responsive to the diversity of their member communities in the service of success for all students. This *Building Blocks Framework for School Leadership Association* is intended to be inclusive of this diversity globally. No two organizations are alike, nor are their starting points, priorities, goals and challenges. This Framework has been designed to reflect the specific professional capital categories in the context of the specific role of lead learner associations. School leadership associations will know that carrying out these specific aspects of their role will mean using a developmental growth mind-set with networked-learning communities in practice that cross all building blocks of the Framework in combination. Using this Framework may support differentiated system pathways to clarifying vision, roles and shared understandings that enable coherence of leadership across the association, schools and classrooms.

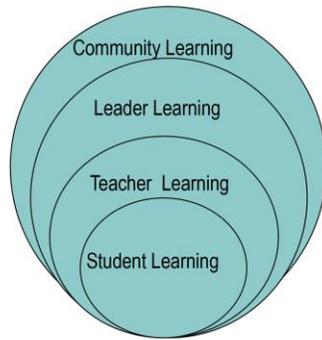
Hope, Reason And Action: The role of leaders and their associations – Mary-Jean Gallagher

There has never been a more important time to be a school leadership association. *The Building Blocks Framework for School Leadership Associations* and especially its focus on being deliberately developmental with dimensions and actions, is crucial at this particular junction in the deepening recognition of the pivotal role of school leaders (and their professional associations). Over the last two symposiums, participating associations have identified commonalities of effective school leadership associations that have formed a framework that may guide action. Our goal is to help each other and all other associations use the right drivers in action.

The building blocks and framework can become the work the associations do. However, success will not be a matter of simply working our way through the components of any framework. As symposium participants know, there will be no one size fits all about the learning work that they do. Despite the fact that the framework is about global research on lead learners, instructional leadership that has the most impact, and lessons learned from around the world about sustaining student achievement, it will be up to each organization to engage the culture of their jurisdictions and define their own pathway related to instructional capacity building and a needs-based learning focus.

Leadership and Capacity Building Related to Instruction - Needs-based Learning Focus

Levels of Learning



- What do teachers need to learn to support what students need to learn?
- What do leaders need to learn to support what teachers need to learn to support what students need to learn?

1



Mary-Jean Gallagher PowerPoint (2015) – Leadership and Capacity Building Related to Instruction – Needs-Based Learning Focus

Hope, Reason and Action

The instructional leadership agenda is about creating and supporting the conditions for increasing consistency in our schools. What does this mean for the work of our associations (and our member needs)? It turns out that the impact of more information and focus on whole system improvement has seemed to be both a blessing and a curse. Mary-Jean Gallagher facilitated consolidation of thinking and reflection about next steps, integrating new learning and what all of this means to us as professional associations with her presentation *Hope, Reason and Action: The role of leaders and their associations*.

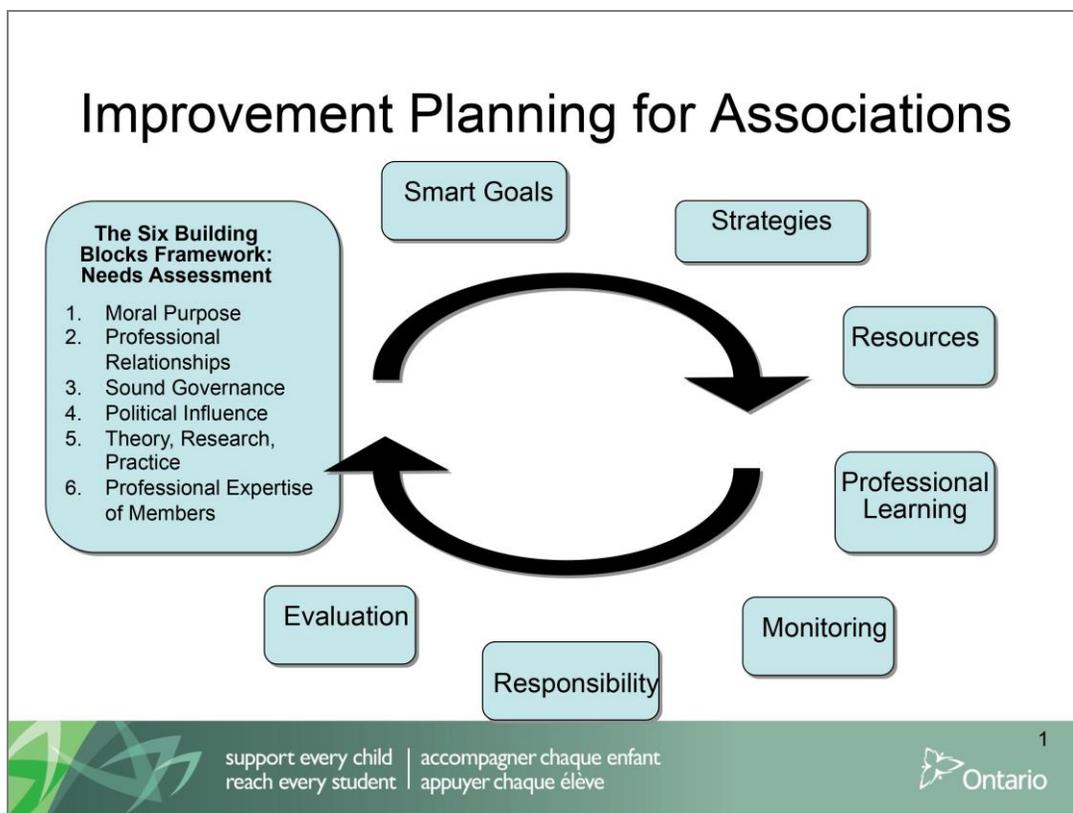
Focus on education has been a worldwide phenomenon with increased government focus, more research including statistics from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), social policy and medical research implications. Parents want more for their children; parents in developing nations want a better future for their children. This translates to an increasing government focus and pressure for a system that delivers and demands with accountability measures related to value and investment. Again, both a blessing and a curse.

With the “environmental landscape,” we now have global views and shared research understandings with specific data from the OECD. On the plus side, this means countries are able to separate anecdote and story from truth about what works with reduced guesswork, and more precision about supporting students to have a successful future. The downside is that this data creates concern with more debate about what needs to be measured and who has the power to assess and set the future goals of education. The evolution of social policy and medical research, new research findings including brain plasticity, the invention of the MRI, etc. mean that we are moving into an age of increasing challenges and opportunities for influencing how we teach, how we teach teachers and how these impact the needs of all students.

The Role of Leaders and Their Associations

Someone has to draw order from the chaos: enter the professional association, focused on creating the conditions to move learning forward. The role of associations can seem complex and challenging as lead learners' "guide by the side" including unconditional support of colleagues, advocacy and all the building blocks that support coherence and fitting all the pieces together to balance mixed blessings. At the heart of any organization is the core question: "Who speaks for our children?"

In both sunny and stormy weather, school leaders (and their associations) speak for the children and focus on their learning needs for driving educational leadership at all levels; professional associations speak for the leaders. In stormy weather, this means being even more skilled and sensitive to the environment. What does it take to lead change? To borrow a phrase from Wayne Hulley, school leaders and their associations are "harbours of hope" toward a growth mindset that all students can and will learn; they use reason in the form of data for evidence-informed decision-making, and maintain a bias for action, knowing that hope and reason are useless without action and continuously learning from the work.



Mary-Jean Gallagher PowerPoint (2015)– Improvement Planning for Associations

The Challenge that Became an Opportunity

- The History of the Ontario Principals' Council

One example of a school leadership association's learning journey is the OPC. As Chief Student Achievement Officer and Assistant Deputy Minister of the Student Achievement Division of the Ontario Ministry of Education, Mary-Jean Gallagher had a unique perspective about the OPC's learning journey and a summary of her perspective of that story follows.

In the 1990s, the environmental landscape in Ontario could indeed be characterized as “stormy seas” with arguments between stakeholders. With the sudden change in union structure, principals were suddenly no longer to be part of unions, leaving principals in Ontario, Canada wondering: who is protecting principals? What is going to happen?

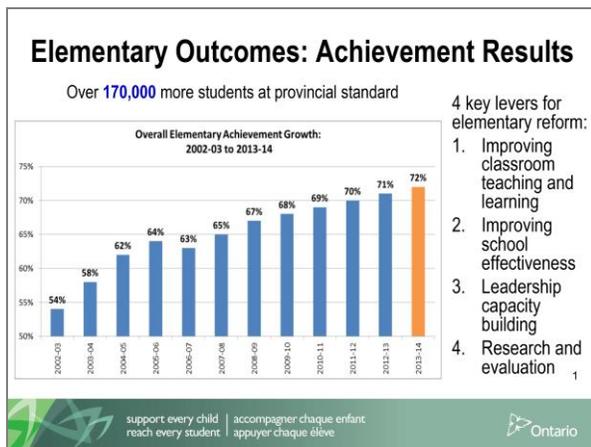
The gap and challenges of this time opened the door to new opportunities and the idea of an organization that might represent members and speak with authority about educational issues, change and the need for school leaders. The pressure was acute around needs analysis and what was needed for principals in Ontario about the six building block areas and how much time should be spent on each of the areas. Process decisions were made at this time focused on facilitating ongoing feedback about OPC Member needs with two-way survey communications resulting in Member input in 24 hours. The OPC invested deeply in providing ongoing professional learning for its Members and in becoming a collaborative partner in dialoguing with the government about what was best for principals in the service of student achievement.

Multiple outcomes of this change stance were that the government came to recognize and respect the OPC's role and voice, there were fewer legal issues as the consequence of facilitating ongoing provision of professional learning and there were conscious choices that while at times not always agreeing with any specific government in power, a school leadership association could either “throw rocks at the tent” or “get into the tent.” Decisions around all six building block areas ultimately focused on student well-being and the importance of school leaders and the role of professional learning associations - and who speaks for our students. The balance of building block dimensions changed over time in conjunction with the association's context.

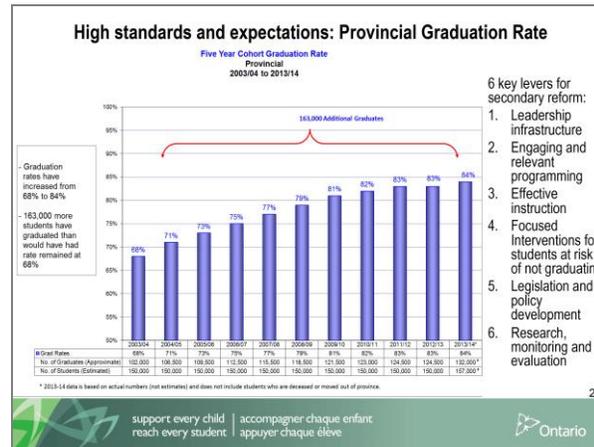
The Ontario Story

High standards, expectations and the moral imperative realized were an important part of this shift in imagining what might be possible for schools: what would conditions look like if we all lived up to being passionately in pursuit of excellence and exemplary leadership in service of learning for all students? The results of igniting the passion of educators, mobilizing data and effective practices with the sustained achievement results have been widely publicized in books authored by International School Leadership Program Advisory Panel members: Michael Fullan, Andy Hargreaves, Avis Glaze and Lyn Sharratt. Over 170,000 more students achieved the provincial standard, and graduation rates have increased from 68 per cent to 84 per cent, meaning 163,000 more students have graduated. The bottom line? If we get the conditions right — the right drivers in action for your context — instructional practice can change outcomes for students.

For more detail, see *Coherence: The right drivers in action for schools, districts, and systems* by Michael Fullan and Joanne Quinn, p. 35–42.



Mary-Jean Gallagher PowerPoint (2015)–
Elementary Outcomes: Achievement Results



Mary-Jean Gallagher PowerPoint (2015) –
High standards and expectations: Provincial Graduation Rate.

Our 2015 White Paper entitled *The School Leadership Association: Six Building Blocks to Maximizing Impact* is intended to both clear the brush and serve as a professional association’s road map. The truth is that many organizations around the world may be frustrated because they don’t know what to do, while many others see this as one of the best opportunities they will have in their professional lifetimes. The *Building Blocks Framework for School Leadership Associations* included in the Appendix of this White Paper has been drafted to provide associations with guidelines and indicators (or actions) for their work in maximizing the impact of their school leaders.

There is no program, no single script, no workbook on how to implement visible learning and development for professional associations; instead, symposium participants from school leadership associations around the world have worked to understand the consequences of actions, monitoring and guidelines for being effective and making decisions in the service of realizing the moral imperative of increasing success for all students. This learning-as-the-work calls not for a restructuring, but for a recapturing of associations to optimize and esteem the positive impacts that all can have on student learning. It also calls for greater clarity and precision of learning from evaluating our effect: in the words of John Hattie, “there has never been more potential than now to deeply implement focus and ... *know thy impact.*”

Next Steps

A Global Review of the *Building Blocks Framework for School Leadership Associations*

This second international symposium of school leadership associations from around the world has resulted in a draft six *Building Blocks Framework for School Leadership Associations*. The publication of this working document included in the Appendix is only a first step toward finding precision around the right drivers in action for school leadership associations. Our proposed next steps, therefore, would be to propose symposium review in which this draft framework is approved in principle.

Over the next few months, we plan to disseminate this white paper and *Building Blocks Framework for School Leadership Associations*. Our aim is to collectively continue to refine the coherence making strategies of professional associations as the route to success. Thank you for all that you do in supporting the principalship to make a difference for students. We look forward to hearing your thoughts and lessons learned on the road to school leadership and ongoing system improvement focused on success for all students.

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The OPC acknowledges the contributions of Debbie Davidson on this paper.

Appendix

[The Building Blocks Framework for School Leadership Associations.](#)

[Strategies for Whole System Change](#)