The Institute for
Education Leadership

LEADERSHIP SELF-REVIEW TOOL

Instructions

Ontario

Ministry of Education

INSTRUCTIONS

AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO BOARDS FOR EFFECTIVE USE OF THE TOOL

Research tells us that principals and vice-principals need to be visionary instructional leaders so that they can support student achievement in their schools. Research also tells us that when boards offer effective support to their school leaders, they can have a positive influence on the self-efficacy of principals and vice-principals and, therefore, on the capacity of schools to improve. By supporting their principals and vice-principals, boards also strengthen the leadership capacity of their entire system.

Learning about effective practices identified by research and used in other boards can be helpful to boards that wish to examine and reflect on their own practices. The Leadership Self-Review Tool (LSRT) was developed to help school boards examine the support they offer their school leaders. It is the first survey instrument of its kind to be used in the Ontario education community, and it is designed to be used by the full range of board leaders – the director, superintendents, principals, vice-principals, aspiring leaders, and consultants.

The LSRT survey sets out examples of successful board leadership development practices that are based both on published research and on approaches that have been shown to be effective elsewhere. It then invites leaders to rate their own board's performance of these practices, as well as the relative priority these practices should have in their boards.

The LSRT is a gap-analysis tool. A scoring sheet that accompanies the survey is used to record the data from the survey and to calculate the "gap" that respondents perceive between present practice and desired level of priority. The scoring sheet also contains sections called "Action: Next Steps", which are provided to encourage reflective, evidence-based conversations that will lead to action and improvement.

The survey identifies six key "domains" of board support for leaders:

- Domain 1: School and District Improvement
- Domain 2: Fostering a Culture of Professionalism
- Domain 3: Leadership Development
- Domain 4: Administrative Structures
- Domain 5: Parent and Community Supports
- Domain 6: Succession Planning, Including Recruitment, to Build Capacity and to Retain and Sustain Effective Leaders

Within each domain are descriptions, or "indicators", of successful practices in that area. These indicators are designed to address the needs of principals and vice-principals, but boards can use them as well to review their leadership development practices, to assess leadership strength and capacity in their systems, and to inform their future planning for leadership. For each indicator, "sample evidence" of what the indicator might look like in practice is provided, and the survey form is designed to let boards insert additional examples that reflect their particular circumstances.

When the survey data have been recorded and the findings analysed, the results will provide a platform for informed conversations and action in areas such as the following:

- identifying training and resource needs
- developing benchmarks
- improving leaders' performance, through performance management and professional development
- celebrating achievement
- improving student, school, and system-wide performance

GETTING STARTED

Boards can administer the LSRT in a variety of ways. One way is to visualize the process occurring in four main stages:

Stage 1: Plan

Stage 2: Study

Stage 3: Reflect

Stage 4: Act

1. PLAN

Planning how to proceed is essential. One procedure is presented here, but school boards are encouraged to modify it to match their own needs and resources.

The following are some suggested planning steps:

(a) Establish a small board committee to guide the use of the tool, including the steps that follow.

Where possible, include individuals from each "group" of leaders in the system – the director, superintendents, principals, vice-principals, aspiring leaders, and consultants.

(b) Distribute and discuss "An Overview of the Research on Leadership and Student Achievement" (included on this CD-ROM), which describes the research used to develop the tool.

Conversations about the research are a good way to stimulate thinking and to introduce leaders in the system to the LSRT.

(c) Have members of the board committee field-test the tool.

Try to anticipate any concerns (e.g., related to language or to administration of the tool). By completing the survey themselves, members of the committee may discover that they wish to add sample evidence for some indicators before sending the LSRT to the board's leaders.

(d) Develop a procedure for administering the LSRT to leaders throughout the system (see Stage 2, "Study", below).

(e) Determine how responses to the survey will be analysed.

Will the analysis be conducted by domain, by indicator, by respondent group, or otherwise? Who will analyse the responses? What is the best way to present the findings?

(f) Ensure that the process will be transparent.

For example, suggest to the board administration team and/or to the trustees that they should plan to take immediate action, based on the results, in a few key areas, to demonstrate the value of the process and the findings.

(g) Plan the process for sharing the results with the system, and develop a way to promote reflection and conversation about the results, particularly among principals and vice-principals.

(h) Establish a procedure for ensuring that recommended actions are implemented.

In many jurisdictions, the board committee may have to present the findings and recommendations to the board's senior administrative team and/or to the trustees.

2. STUDY

Explaining the process to leaders in the system and getting them to complete the LSRT survey requires organization and communication.

During this stage of the process, decisions must be made about whether all or only some of the board's leaders will be invited to use the LSRT, and how the tool will be distributed to and completed by them. For example, it could be administered to everyone at the same time, or to smaller, more manageable regional groups, such as the administrators of a family of schools, at different times. It could be administered to all leaders in the system at a board meeting, or distributed to individuals in hard copy or in electronic form (e.g., by e-mail or on CD-ROMs, or by posting on an intranet). Also required at this stage are decisions about how the results will be compiled, and by whom.

The following are some suggested steps for administering the tool:

(a) Decide who will be asked to use the tool.

Will everyone in a leadership role be asked? Or will you begin with one group only? For example, it may be more manageable to start with principals and vice-principals in one area of the board. Or perhaps a sample of leaders would suffice. There are many ways to choose a sample, and many reasons for doing so. A sample might consist, for example, of every third person on a master list, or of people who meet specified criteria, such as working in a certain size of school or a certain geographic location.

(b) Decide how the tool will be distributed.

It can be provided to individuals as hard copy, in which case the respondents would be asked to mark their answers in pen and return the completed form. The survey PDF can also be sent out as an e-mail attachment, and the respondents asked to save the completed form and return it as an e-mail attachment. Alternatively, the survey PDF can be copied onto CD-ROMs *for distribution to respondents, or it can be posted on the board's intranet, where it would be accessed and completed electronically. (See also the Frequently Asked Questions section on this* CD-ROM.*)*

(c) Decide how and when the completed forms will be collected.

The format used for distributing the survey will likely determine how the completed forms are returned; for example, hard copies will be returned as hard copies. Regardless of the format, however, it is essential to clearly indicate how responses are to be returned, to whom they should be sent, and the date by which they are expected to be returned. Plan to remind people of the instructions for returning the forms.

(d) Ensure that all forms are completed and returned.

(e) Collate the responses for each completed form.

Whether the surveys are completed and returned in hard copy or electronically, your board planning committee will need to tally the responses so that they can be analysed. If your board has use of an interactive survey analysis tool, the results will be collated electronically.

Use the gap analysis scoring sheet, provided on this CD-ROM, to record the results calculated in items (f) and (g), below.

(f) Calculate the average (mean) "Current Practice" scale responses and the average (mean) "Priority" scale responses for each indicator.

This calculation should be done for all respondents and/or for each respondent group.

(g) Determine the average gap score.

Once the average (mean) "Current Practice" and the average (mean) "Priority" scale scores have been determined for each indicator, you can calculate the difference between these scores to get the mean gap score.

To the extent possible, board assistance should be provided for distributing the LSRT and collecting the completed forms, and for keying responses and calculating the mean scale scores for each indicator. However, members of the board committee responsible for the project should familiarize themselves with the findings (see Stage 3, "Reflect").

3. REFLECT

Sufficient time should be allocated for critically examining and interrogating the data. At the very least, the board committee should have a chance to review the findings and discuss their implications for practice. When examining the results, it is particularly important to look for large gap scores that occur for high-priority indicators. Large gaps are a clear indication that some action is required to improve the practice involved.

Conversations are important forums for accountability. Providing all respondent groups with the opportunity to discuss the findings is an inclusive way to get practical ideas for the actions or next steps that can be taken to improve support for leaders and build leadership capacity.

4. ACT

One of the key reasons for engaging in a self-review process is to focus on the questions "How well are we doing?" and "How can we do better?" Determining next steps that will make a difference is what the process is all about. (The gap analysis scoring sheet allows for recording next steps based on the calculated gap for each indicator.) Taking action demonstrates a willingness to listen to, and respond to, the views of stakeholders. When the action is integrated into routine management practices, the likelihood that changes will be implemented and that improvements will occur is enhanced.