Realizing the renewed vision through transformational leadership

Achieving Excellence
The Ontario Leadership Congress 2014, “System-level leadership: Building Strong Districts Together” and the Fall Regional Symposia, provided the groundwork for going deeper with realizing Ontario’s renewed vision for education, through strong and sustainable leadership. The Ontario Leadership Congress-Spring Symposium 2015 (OLC/SS2015) focuses on the “how” for implementing our renewed vision. District teams will work together and engage in conversations that will focus on the structural, cultural and organizational changes required in order to Achieve Excellence, Ensure Equity, Promote Well-Being and Enhance Public Confidence.

Transformational and Instructional Leadership: Leadership for Learning
During the OLC 2014, participants had the opportunity to listen to Dr. Meredith Honig from the University of Washington speak of her research on leadership and organizational change in education systems. Her article “From Tinkering to Transformation: Strengthening School District Central Office Performance” was of particular interest as we explore transformative leadership in Ontario districts and schools.

Terms such as “instructional leadership”, “transformational leadership” as well as “leadership for learning” have gained prominence in educational leadership vocabulary and have been the focus of multiple studies to assess the impact of leadership on student achievement (Hallinger, P. 2012).

Dr. Kenneth Leithwood, Professor Emeritus of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, references instructional and transformational leadership in his reports: The Ontario Leadership Framework 2012 with a Discussion of the Research Foundations and Strong Districts & Their Leadership A Paper Commissioned by the Council of Ontario Directors of Education and The Institute for Education Leadership2013, which are the foundation research for the Ontario Leadership Framework.

Leadership for learning has evolved from instructional leadership (IL) and transformational leadership (TL) which encompasses both.

Transformational leadership is practiced in settings whereby:
- leaders create the conditions for change, growth and relationship building which are essential in a learning organization;
- there is a professional culture of learning;
- it is characterized by continuous learning/sharing/mobilizing with agreed upon expectations around the process and where all leaders are undertaking inquiry with parameters;
- theories of action are mandatory for change as they build the ramps to move and scale up the practices;
- there is a definition of what we want something to look like (e.g., equity, inclusion, alignment) and the systematic steps to get there; and,
- senior leadership teams create the conditions for coherence and cohesion.

As Ontario leaders continue to develop leadership practices and personal leadership resources, and boards of education continue to explore and develop the nine characteristics of strong districts, the OLC/SS2015 will...
provide district teams with the opportunity to exchange innovative strategies and ideas that result in clear improvements of student achievement and well-being. Through this cross-pollination of effective practices, district teams will analyse the steps and conditions that led to past successes and look at the processes required to scale/implement new or renewed future ideas.

**Key Reflective Questions for the OLC/SS 2015**
- How is your district creating the conditions, encouraging and promoting all staff to be innovative?
- How are you scaling up innovative strategies that result in clear improvements in student achievement and well-being?
- How must the system transform in order for the vision to be realized for students?

**Education Advisors**

With the 2014-2015 school-year now well underway, so is the implementation of our renewed vision for education. In support of that, four education advisors have been appointed to help turn our vision into results. During the OLC/SS 2015, we will have the opportunity to seek advice from all four advisors as they engage individually and collectively with the district teams. Taking on the role of “disruptive innovators” the advisors will be asking challenging questions and providing different perspectives.

**Dr. Carol Campbell**, Associate Professor, Leadership and Educational Change, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto.

**Dr. Jean Clinton** is an Associate Clinical Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences at McMaster, division of Child Psychiatry.

**Dr. Michael Fullan** is a professor emeritus of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto.

**Dr. Andy Hargreaves** is the Thomas More Brennan Chair in the Lynch School of Education at Boston College with the mission to promote social justice and connect theory and practice in education.

**Unpacking and Developing a Common Understanding**

Using the PechaKucha* format, participants will have the opportunity to go deeper and discuss concepts such as “transformation and innovation” as it relates to the education context in Ontario. Other concepts explored will be “alignment, coherence, cohesion and congruence”.

*PechaKucha 20x20 is a fast-paced, concise presentation format devised by 2 architects Astrid Klein and Mark Dytham, where you show 20 images, each 20 seconds. The images advance automatically and you talk along the images.

**References:**
The Ontario Leadership Framework (Revised 2013);
The Ontario Leadership Framework 2012 with a Discussion of the Research Foundations, Leithwood 2012;
Strong Districts & Their Leadership, Leithwood 2013;