Ontario Leadership Strategy – Quick Facts: 2010-11

The Ontario Leadership Strategy was developed to foster leadership of the highest possible quality in schools and school boards across the province. “Reach Every Student: Energizing Ontario Education” (2008) identified school leadership as a key supporting condition for teaching and learning. Our efforts are sharply focused on three core priorities: high levels of student achievement; reduced gaps in student achievement; and increased public confidence in publicly funded education.

Why Leadership?

“Real and lasting improvement in Ontario schools requires every school to have a culture of collaborative professionalism, in which educators work together to use evidence to improve their practice and students’ learning. The creation of thousands of such schools is a call for high quality leadership throughout the system. In addition, development of school and district leadership can improve the ability of leaders to act together within and across districts to implement the three core priorities and provide the supporting conditions for learning.”

B. Pervin, M. J. Gallagher, G. Clarke, J. Grieve, A. Davis and R. Théberge
Assistant Deputy Ministers, Ministry’s Leadership Implementation Team

What is the Ontario Leadership Strategy (OLS)?
The OLS is a comprehensive plan of action designed to support student achievement and well-being by attracting and developing skilled and passionate school and system leaders. It was launched with a three-year plan in the fall of 2008. The theory of action driving the OLS is that significant progress towards the province’s three core priorities can be accomplished by directly improving the quality of school and district leadership; supporting and adding value to the efforts of others responsible for leadership development; and working in concert with other ministry divisions, aiming to improve the conditions for teaching and learning in schools and classrooms.

Year 3 – Going Deeper (2010-11)

2010-11 is a time to consolidate efforts to date, to go deeper with implementation and to strengthen connectivity and synergy between leadership development and initiatives that support student achievement and well-being. This includes an increased focus on supporting effective leadership of operations and management as well as instructional leadership.

• The Board Leadership Development Strategy (BLDS) fosters the development of leaders, both academic and business, of the highest quality. The Board Leadership Development Implementation Continuum enables boards to develop a plan of action that advances the priorities set out in their Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement and Board Strategic Plan by maximizing the effectiveness of their leadership development practices
  • Mentoring of Newly Appointed School and System Leaders is a focal point of the BLDS
  • Principal and Vice-Principal Performance Appraisal (PPA) Regulation and PPM 152 - Terms and Conditions of Employment of Principals and Vice-Principals are part of the BLDS
  • Supporting elected school board leaders by working with the four provincial trustee associations to explore how the OLF could support their trustee capacity-building program
  • The Institute for Education Leadership (IEL) brings together leader associations from all four systems, and the ministry, to collectively promote research, policy and practice related to improving school and system leadership in order to maximize student achievement and well-being
  • Alignment - Leading Student Achievement Strategy, School Effectiveness Framework, Politique d’aménagement linguistique de l’Ontario, Ministry Operational Reviews, and Ontario’s Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy

The Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF)
The OLF describes what good leadership looks like and is foundational to the implementation of the OLS. It is a support for career-long professional learning, helping to stimulate and guide learning-focused conversations about effective leadership practices and approaches for resolving specific issues and challenges facing school and system leaders.

Focus on Core Leadership Capacities (CLCs)

• Setting goals
• Aligning resources with priorities
• Promoting collaborative learning cultures
• Using data
• Engaging in courageous conversations
Achievements to Date: Years 1 & 2 (2008-10)
• The Succession Planning and Talent Development Continuum was implemented by boards with a focus on Data Collection, Skills and Competencies, and Professional Learning.
• The Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) of effective practices as a foundation of the OLS was provided by the IEL, including the Core Leadership Capacities (CLCs) as a focus of ministry professional learning and supports.
• In Conversation and Ideas Into Action were disseminated to engage leaders in issues most relevant to student achievement and well-being in Ontario.
• The Principal Congress 2009 and 2010 engaged school leaders in sharing practices that supported closing achievement gaps.
• Mentoring for Newly Appointed School and System Leaders provided support tailored to these unique roles.
• Principal Performance Appraisal (PPA) was designed as a goal-oriented process.
• The Premier’s Leader-to-Leader initiative focused on sharing effective practices through a network of principals.
• The Leading Student Achievement (LSA) project created a large network of principals focused on improving instructional leadership practice.

Ontario Leadership Strategy – Lessons Learned So Far – Some Examples
- Align the leadership strategy with overall education goals – e.g. the LSA project is based on the same goals as the provincial improvement agenda; it aims to equip principals with capacities they need to achieve these goals
- Increase leadership capacity and generate evidence about strengths, weaknesses and impacts – e.g. the Principal Congress provided information about how principals are closing achievement gaps and surfaced challenges that require further attention by districts and the ministry to support principals
- Increase capacity needed now and in the future – e.g. the OLF was developed from a strong research base which supports the goals of literacy, numeracy and increasing the graduation rate and now includes emerging priorities like implementing early learning initiatives
- Differentiate approaches for different roles and contexts – e.g. the mentoring initiative supports leaders to drive towards the three core priorities while making room for support to be tailored in response to unique or especially challenging aspects of new leaders’ contexts
- Focus on a small number of powerful initiatives – e.g. CLCs focus on addressing particular areas of leadership development needs identified through the pilots in mentoring and appraisal
- Engage partners in design and ongoing development – e.g. IEL is a significant support for effective tri-level implementation of the OLS
- Learn the way forward; monitor and adapt in response to the evidence – e.g. senior staff from across the ministry meet on a regular basis to ensure there is a common, coordinated approach to supporting leadership development

Looking Ahead
• Evaluation of the Ontario Leadership Strategy (OLS). Work is underway to conduct a formative and summative evaluation of the OLS. Its purpose is to capture progress to date and help refine and recalibrate elements of the OLS so that they contribute as much as possible to provincial priorities going forward.
• Revised District Practices. Arising from a project with directors in the south-west region, the IEL is working with Dr. Ken Leithwood and directors in regions across the province to develop a revised set of district practices based on interjurisdictional research, research from Ontario case studies and surveys of Ontario principals and district leaders. This project provides significant professional learning opportunities for directors and will contribute ground-breaking research on district effectiveness in Ontario.
• Career Cycle Approach. Working with Dr. Ken Leithwood, the ministry is developing a career cycle approach to expand upon the core leadership practices from the OLF, with a particular focus on those that impact on student achievement based on evidence. The intended outcome is a more detailed articulation of what good leadership looks like for these key practices at different phases and in different contexts of leaders’ careers.

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?
- Contact your Regional Office or the Leadership Development Branch at 416-325-2623.
- Ministry’s Leadership Development Branch website: www.ontario.ca/eduleadership
- Ontario’s Institute for Education Leadership (IEL) website: www.education-leadership-ontario.ca/home.shtml

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