



Response to the Ministry of Education's Comprehensive Leadership Strategy

The Ontario Principals' Council is pleased to express our views and thoughts on the Ministry's Comprehensive Leadership Strategy. This initiative is vital to the work of current and aspiring school leaders. As the role of the principal becomes increasingly complex, we need to ensure that the best teacher candidates are attracted to the role and that those in the role are encouraged to stay. A comprehensive strategy that makes the role more appealing, provides necessary supports, offers equitable compensation, improves working conditions and recognizes the efforts of front-line school leaders will go a long way toward attracting and retaining the best leaders for Ontario's students.

1. What is the ideal profile of a Principal/Vice-Principal in today's world?

In today's changing and demanding environment, an ideal school leader is one who

- Is an instructional leader, inspiring and supporting staff to maximize student achievement;
- Is politically astute and capable of operating within a unionized environment;
- Can engage the broader community;
- Is a multi-tasker who can effectively manage sometimes conflicting issues in a complex role;
- Has the capacity to effectively use data to support student achievement;
- Is an adaptive visionary who can cope with the provision of education in our changing and complex social and technological environment; and
- Is a collaborator/team builder.

2. How can we attract/recruit/retain the best aspiring leaders?

- Provide the appropriate amount of administrative support in schools to deal with the complexity of the role and the increased workload;
- Remove the structural inequity between elementary and secondary salaries within the School Foundation Grant;
- Draft a regulation to standardize principal/vice principal terms and conditions of employment to ensure no discipline, demotion or dismissal without cause or due process and allow for third party conflict resolution for contract disputes;
- Assure assignments in five year increments as a minimum, unless the board and the principal mutually agree to an earlier transfer;

- Enable a return to teaching with bargaining unit seniority intact so that aspiring leaders can “test drive” the role, which is crucial during times of declining enrolment;
- Ensure that the salary is commensurate with the increased responsibilities and complexity of the role; and that there is a reasonable, minimum gap between vice-principal/principal salaries and those of top-grid teacher salaries, PAR or consulting teachers; and
- Encourage boards to recognize that principals are part of the management team and should be included in all major decisions affecting schools.

3. How can we make the role more attractive and manageable?

The role has become almost unmanageable.

- Administrative processes must be streamlined.
- Additional management resources must be added so that the Principal can focus on the important role of instructional leader to support staff and increase student achievement.
- Too often, the hands of principals are tied by terms of the collective agreements, to which they have little input, preventing school leaders from carrying out their duties and ensuring a safe learning environment.

4. What is needed in terms of ministry support?

We have largely addressed this question in the above responses (trial period for new administrators; additional pay for administrator responsibilities; reasonable and fair T&C contracts; enhanced professional development supports).

- In terms of P.D., it is essential that the OPC be an integral part of the development and delivery of ministry initiatives affecting schools, including this leadership strategy. Not only do we have a proven, successful track record in the provision of PD, but school leaders will look first to their professional association as the credible and preferred deliverer of such programs.
- The government needs to reconsider the role of the College of Teachers with respect to the structure of the PQP and its delivery; and peer review where there are professional issues and potentially fitness to practice and /or disciplinary issues.
- There needs to be an enhanced role for Principals in the collective bargaining process with unionized employees to ensure that collective agreements do not prevent the Principal from performing his or her leadership responsibilities in school improvement. This would include addressing issues such as the delivery of professional development during staff meetings and the amount of time that teachers are obligated to supervise students.

5. What career long supports are needed at various levels and stages to support the alignment of Ministry of Education priorities and leadership development?

- Coaching and Mentorship programs in all school boards;
- Leadership development provided by the OPC, in partnership with school boards, and funded by the ministry;
- Wellness programs as part of a benefits package;
- Employee Assistance programs; and
- Working mechanisms for Principals to be a part of Ministry initiatives at the initial stages and throughout development to ensure that these initiatives will work well at the school level.

6. What do Superintendents need so that they can support principals and themselves?

- Time and resources to provide supports to Principals;
- Freedom from trustee-initiated issues that have little to do with student achievement;
- Joint professional development with Principals;
- The capacity to support Principals with difficult and complex issues with parents, unions, etc; and
- An appropriate allocation of SO's to be able to do the job.

7. Ideas for ensuring alignment and integration of ministry activities to support leadership development

- Setting targets by September that don't change over the course of the school year;
- Aligning and integrating initiatives such as:
 - Leadership Framework
 - School Effectiveness Framework
 - The Student Success/Learning to 18 Initiatives
 - Literacy/Numeracy Secretariat
 - Leading Student Achievement
 - Equity Strategy; and
- Ensuring the appropriate input from Principal Councils during the development of initiatives and programs to have a good understanding of what the implementation will actually look like at the school level.