

# Introduction: Building Professional Leadership for Multifaceted School Improvement

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As the world exits the pandemic, it is time to reflect on what has been learned and re-engage professional leadership for school improvement on multiple fronts. Due to the massive course switch to online teaching during COVID-19, school leaders might rightfully place attention on the restoration of face-to-face instruction and inadvertently overlook the non-instructional investments that are critical to the whole child’s development. To broaden the mission of education across *academic, physical, and socio-emotional* domains, principals, assistant principals, and other administrators need to establish well-rounded “whole school, whole community” support for the whole child’s development.

External to the school capacity building is the ongoing growth of racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse student populations. As higher-income college-educated residents flock to urban communities, professional leaders are expected to embrace diversity and cultivate learning environments in which all students and school personnel are valued. The gentrification process requires an enhanced theoretical framework to guide school leaders in overseeing the trajectory of school transformation. The existing models, such as the one advocated by [Posey-Maddox et al. \(2014\)](#) for conceptualizing school gentrification, need to be expanded by examining how school gentrification unfolds in urban schools based on a deep understanding of the school leadership literature and the school gentrification scholarship.

In addition, as Steve Jobs advocated, “Great things in business are never done by one person, they’re done by a team of people” (see [Peek, 2023](#), p. 6). Visionary leaders prepare themselves to confront challenges through partnership building. Professional collaboration is essential to creating a sustainable system to address students’ immediate needs and develop supportive conditions for long-term school improvement. In particular, teachers work directly with students in classroom settings and are well-positioned as important team members for school quality enhancement. While school leaders attempt to recruit and retain a diversified teacher workforce, additional consideration should be given to support marginalized candidates, especially during the induction process of gay, novice, and English Language Arts (ELA) teachers who may face unexpected challenges in career development.

To promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in education, school administrators need to foster a positive culture for teachers to strengthen their beliefs that they have the

capacity to effectively teach an increasingly diverse group of students, making a positive impact on students' academic performance. The emphasis on teacher efficacy has been well-justified by the extensive research literature linking instructor's self-efficacy indicators to student learning outcomes. Ultimately, the effectiveness of school leadership directly impacts the job satisfaction of teachers. Since job satisfaction can be deeply contextual, an in-depth study is essential to revealing profound factors of teacher attrition.

In summary, principals, assistant principals, and other school administrators carry on leadership responsibilities to promote balanced student development, constructive school transformation, sustainable partnership building, and insightful teacher support. To meet the multifaceted needs, we are pleased to introduce this issue with six articles that address various aspects of professional leadership for school improvement. We appreciate the contributing authors for working with us to complete repeated revisions of their original manuscripts. We are also grateful to our expert reviewers for their thoughtful suggestions. As illustrated by the highlights below, these articles have jointly expanded our understanding of the contemporary opportunities and challenges of school leadership during and after the unprecedented period of COVID-19.

The first article by Shana E. Rochester and Mavis G. Sanders is devoted to an examination of school changes in non-instructional investments during COVID-19. Principals' reports are gathered from a national sample of U.S. pre-kindergarten through 12th grade schools during two school years 2019–2020 and 2020-2021. Post-COVID-19 implications have been drawn for school principals to guide the Whole Child reform movements as the leading experts.

In the second article, Alisha Butler and Rachel Boggs expand [Posey-Maddox et al.'s \(2014\)](#) model to configure professional responses to school gentrification. They begin with a discussion of how gentrification manifests in schools to lay the foundation for understanding competing interests, population needs, and macro-level policies due to demographic changes. Built on 18 studies of school gentrification's dynamics, they outline how school leaders communicate and market schools to families, cultivate school climates and manage personnel and resources in gentrifying schools. Understanding the relationship between gentrification-induced demographic changes and school leadership behavior can lead to ameliorating or exacerbating inequities in K-12 settings.

Corrie Stone-Johnson, Lea Hubbard, Barbara Resultan, and Kate Steilen write the third article to explore school leaders' role expansion during an external crisis and beyond. Drawing from a theory of responsible leadership, they report interview results from 26 elementary school principals in 14 states to explore how school leaders facilitate learning in a time of crisis. They find the need for school leaders to network with education stakeholders and peer principals to facilitate positive changes that impact all students, particularly those receiving special education and English language services. Expansion of the responsible leadership plays a critical role in achieving various goals in a school crisis.

The fourth article is contributed by Summer Davis to examine the principal's role in the induction experiences of a gay, novice ELA teacher. It enriches the research literature with empirical evidence about the experiences of a first-year middle school ELA teacher. Based on multiple semi-structured interviews, ethnographic field observations, preservice field experience journals, coursework, and artifacts of student learning, the results reflect the subject's sense-making from the surroundings and interactions with school administration that directly impacts her teaching practices. For preservice LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning) teachers, little is known about their transition from teachers-in-training to professional educators. This research reconfirms the teacher induction period as one of the most critical points in the teacher retention process.

In the fifth article, Stephanie Herzig Johnson evaluates the role of teacher self-efficacy in the implementation of inclusive practices. The author takes a micro ethnographic discourse analysis approach to collect quantitative and qualitative data from five second grade and special education teachers as they implemented the inclusive education model in their classrooms. Using Bandura's self-efficacy model as a theoretical framework, the author finds links between teachers' levels of self-efficacy and inclusion implementation outcomes. With self-efficacy as a modifiable variable from teacher preparation, school administrators can benefit from this study by strengthening professional development opportunities for teachers.

In the sixth article, Jennifer Richardson McGee, Gwynne Shoaf, Timothy J. Huelsman, and Terry McClannon attempt to disentangle the construct of teacher job satisfaction. Interview data are collected from 18 teachers at two elementary schools to investigate factors influencing teacher job satisfaction. While 16 teachers are satisfied with their jobs overall, the authors find several challenges connecting to the ideas of what is missing from education and what is added to teaching. Their impact on job satisfaction is worth noting because teacher turnover might result from the feeling of stress and burnout.

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