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The Four Dimensions of Instructional Leadership: What School Leaders Must Do To Improve Teaching Effectiveness

Presenter:
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University of Washington Center for Educational Leadership

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About the Presenter

Dr. June Rimmer develops and manages district partnerships committed to building leaders’ expertise in instructional leadership and transforming central office. Prior to joining the CEL team, June served in numerous leadership roles in urban education settings most recently as Chief Academic Officer in Seattle. She has also served as a program director with the Stupski Foundation in San Francisco coaching and providing technical assistance to urban district leaders committed to education reform.
Mission

The Center for Educational Leadership (CEL) is a nonprofit service arm of the University of Washington College of Education dedicated to eliminating the achievement gap that continues to divide our nation’s children along the lines of race, class, language and disability.
Equity is a key principle of our work.
The Four Dimensions of Instructional Leadership: What School Leaders Must Do To Improve Teaching Effectiveness

**CEL’s Approach to Eliminating the Achievement Gap**

**Central Office Transformation**
Helping Central Office leaders to develop policies, practices and structures that support principals and teachers in delivering high-quality instruction.

**Leadership**
Helping district leaders and principals observe, analyze, and lead for high-quality instruction.

**Teaching**
Developing the teaching expertise necessary to ensure that all students learn at high levels.

**Student Learning**
All students, regardless of race, class, language and disability, achieve at high levels.
Working at all Levels of the System
CEL’s Theory of Action: Foundational Ideas

- If students are not learning they are not being afforded powerful learning opportunities.
- Teaching is a highly complex and sophisticated endeavor.
- Practice of sophisticated endeavors only improves when it is open for public scrutiny.
- Improving practice in a culture of public scrutiny requires reciprocal accountability.
- Reciprocal accountability implies a particular kind of leadership to improve teaching and learning.
- Leaders cannot lead what they don’t know.
Our Focus for Today: What Must Leaders Do to Improve Instruction?
Developing the Leadership Expertise to Improve Instruction: A Two-Part Equation

1. Developing a common language and shared vision for high quality instruction – *the better we see, the better we are able to lead.*

2. Developing greater expertise in leading for instructional improvement – *the better we lead, the better we are able to improve teaching practice and thus learning for all students.*
Developing a Shared Vision and Common Language of Quality Instruction
An Instructional Framework Is:

- A set of descriptions of teaching behaviors.
- Linked to improved student learning.
- Based on research and the work of practitioners.
# 5 Dimensions of Teaching and Learning™

## Instructional Framework Version 4.0

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<tr>
<th>SD™ Subdimension</th>
<th>The Vision</th>
<th>Guiding Questions</th>
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| **Standards**    | • The lesson is based on grade-level standards, is meaningful and relevant beyond the task at hand (e.g., relates to a broader purpose or context such as problem-solving, citizenship, etc.), and helps students learn and apply transferable knowledge and skills.  
• The lesson is intentionally linked to other lessons (previous and future) in support of students meeting standard(s). | • How do the standard and learning target relate to content knowledge, habits of thinking in the discipline, transferable skills, and students’ assessed needs as learners (re: language, culture, academic background)?  
• How do the standard and learning target relate to the ongoing work of this classroom? To the intellectual lives of students beyond this classroom? To broader ideals such as problem-solving, citizenship, etc.?  
• What is the learning target(s) of the lesson? How is it meaningful and relevant beyond the specific task/activity?  
• Is the task/activity aligned with the learning target? How does what students are actually engaged in doing help them to achieve the desired outcome(s)?  
• How are the standard(s) and learning target communicated and made accessible to all students?  
• How do students communicate their understanding about what they are learning and why they are learning it?  
• How does the learning target clearly communicate what students will know and be able to do as a result of the lesson? What will be acceptable evidence of student learning?  
• How do teaching point(s) support the learning needs of individual students in meeting the learning target(s)? |
| **Learning Target and Teaching Points** | • The learning target is clearly articulated, linked to standards, embedded in instruction, and understood by students.  
• The learning target is measurable. The criteria for success are clear to students and the performance tasks provide evidence that students are able to understand and apply learning in context.  
• The teaching points are based on knowledge of students’ learning needs (academic background, life experiences, culture and language) in relation to the learning target(s). | |
| **Intellectual Work** | • Students’ classroom work embodies substantive intellectual engagement (reading, thinking, writing, problem-solving and meaning-making).  
• Students take ownership of their learning to develop, test and refine their thinking. | • What is the frequency of teacher talk, teacher-initiated questions, student-initiated questions, student-to-student interaction, student presentation of work, etc.?  
• What does student talk reveal about the nature of students’ thinking?  
• Where is the locus of control over learning in the classroom?  
• What evidence do you observe of student engagement in intellectual, academic work? What is the nature of that work?  
• What is the level and quality of the intellectual work in which students are engaged (e.g. factual recall, procedure, inference, analysis, meta-cognition)?  
• What specific strategies and structures are in place to facilitate participation and meaning-making by all students (e.g. small group work, partner talk, writing, etc.)?  
• Do all students have access to participation in the work of the group? Why/why not? How is participation distributed?  
• What questions, statements, and actions does the teacher use to encourage students to share their thinking with one another, to build on one another’s ideas, and to assess their understanding of one another’s ideas? |
| **Engagement Strategies** | • Engagement strategies capitalize on and build upon students’ academic background, life experiences, culture and language to support rigorous and culturally relevant learning.  
• Engagement strategies encourage equitable and purposeful student participation and ensure that all students have access to, and are expected to participate in, learning. | |
| **Talk** | • Student talk reflects discipline-specific habits of thinking and ways of communicating.  
• Student talk embodies substantive and intellectual thinking. | |
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<td><strong>Curriculum &amp; Pedagogy</strong></td>
<td>Instructional materials (e.g., texts, resources, etc.) and tasks are appropriately challenging and supportive for all students, are aligned with the learning target and content area standards, and are culturally and academically relevant. The lesson materials and tasks are related to a larger unit and to the sequence and development of conceptual understanding over time.</td>
<td>• How does the learning in the classroom reflect authentic ways of reading, writing, thinking and reasoning in the discipline under study? (e.g., How does the work reflect what mathematicians do and how they think?)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching Approaches and/or Strategies</strong></td>
<td>The teacher makes decisions and utilizes instructional approaches in ways that intentionally support his/her instructional purposes. Instruction reflects and is consistent with pedagogical content knowledge and is culturally responsive, in order to engage students in disciplinary habits of thinking. The teacher uses different instructional strategies, based on planned and/or in-the-moment decisions, to address individual learning needs.</td>
<td>• How does the content of the lesson (e.g., text or task) influence the intellectual demand (e.g., the thinking and reasoning required)? How does it align to grade-level standards?</td>
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<td><strong>Scaffolds for Learning</strong></td>
<td>The teacher provides scaffolds for the learning task that support the development of the targeted concepts and skills and gradually releases responsibility, leading to student independence.</td>
<td>• How does the teacher scaffold the learning to provide all students with access to the intellectual work and to participation in meaning-making?</td>
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<td><strong>Assessment for Student Learning</strong></td>
<td>Students assess their own learning in relation to the learning target. The teacher creates multiple assessment opportunities and expects all students to demonstrate learning. Assessment methods include a variety of tools and approaches to gather comprehensive and quality information about the learning styles and needs of each student (e.g., anecdotal notes, conferencing, student work samples, etc.). The teacher uses observable systems and routines for recording and using student assessment data (e.g., charts, conferencing records, portfolios, rubrics). Assessment criteria, methods and purposes are transparent and match the learning target.</td>
<td>• What does the instruction reveal about the teacher’s understanding of how students learn, of disciplinary habits of thinking, and of content knowledge?</td>
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<td><strong>Adjustments</strong></td>
<td>The teacher uses formative assessment data to make in-the-moment instructional adjustments, modify future lessons, and give targeted feedback to students.</td>
<td>• How is students’ learning of content and transferable skills supported through the teacher’s intentional use of instructional strategies and materials?</td>
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<td><strong>Classroom Environment &amp; Culture</strong></td>
<td>The physical arrangement of the room (e.g., meeting area, resources, student seating, etc.) is conducive to student learning. The teacher uses the physical space of the classroom to assess student understanding and support learning (e.g., teacher moves around the room to observe and confer with students). Students have access to resources in the physical environment to support learning and independence (e.g., libraries, materials, charts, technology, etc.).</td>
<td>• How does the teacher differentiate instruction for students with different learning needs—academic background, life experiences, culture and language?</td>
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<td><strong>Classroom Routines and Rituals</strong></td>
<td>Classroom systems and routines facilitate student responsibility, ownership and independence. Available time is maximized in service of learning.</td>
<td>• How does the teacher adjust instruction based on in-the-moment assessment of student understanding?</td>
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<td><strong>Classroom Culture</strong></td>
<td>Classroom discourse and interactions reflect high expectations and beliefs about all students’ intellectual capabilities and create a culture of inclusivity, equity and accountability for learning. Classroom norms encourage risk-taking, collaboration and respect for thinking.</td>
<td>• How does the physical arrangement of the classroom, as well as the availability of resources and space to both the teacher and students, purposefully support and scaffold student learning?</td>
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<td>• How and to what extent do the systems and routines of the classroom facilitate student ownership and independence?</td>
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<td>• How and to what extent do the systems and routines of the classroom reflect values of community, inclusivity, equity and accountability for learning?</td>
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<td>• What is the climate for learning in this classroom? How do relationships (teacher-student, student-student) support or hinder student learning?</td>
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<td>• What do discourse and interactions reveal about what is valued in this classroom?</td>
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| | | • What are sources of status and authority in this classroom (e.g., reasoning and justification, intellectual risk-taking, popularity, aggressiveness, etc.)?
The 5D Instructional Framework as a Tool:

- A “lens” for classroom/peer observations.
- A guide for teachers.
- A reference during lesson planning and staff meetings about instructional practices.
- The entry point into the teacher evaluation rubric.
Does Your School District Have an Instructional Framework That Defines Quality Instruction and Drives Teaching and Learning?

- Yes
- No
- It is a work in progress!
Developing the Leadership Expertise to Improve Instruction: A Two-Part Equation

1. Developing a common language and shared vision for high quality instruction – *the better we see, the better we are able to lead.*

2. Developing greater expertise in leading for instructional improvement – *the better we lead, the better we are able to improve teaching practice and thus learning for all students.*
Instructional Leadership

Essential Questions:

1. What is instructional leadership, and why does it matter?
2. What is the work of instructional leaders?
3. How can central office leaders support school leaders as they lead to improve teaching effectiveness?
Why does Leadership Matter?

Among all school-related factors, leadership is second only to classroom instruction in influence on student learning.

What is Influencing Our Thinking About Instructional Leadership?

- Work with over 116 districts in 22 states.
- Reviews of the research literature.
- Learning from our work with the Gates Foundation Principal Leadership Knowledge Project.
A Critical Discovery

- Most have job descriptions and evaluation instruments with a broad range of expectations including instructional leadership.
- Few districts have clear definitions of instructional leadership and descriptions of what instructional leaders do to improve instruction.
Shifts in Thinking About Instructional Leadership

**From:**

- A generic concept.
- Principal, the sole instructional leader.
- Improving practice, an occasional PD activity.
- Occasional use of data.
- Primary focus on instruction.

**To:**

- A well-defined set of practices.
- Principal, the ‘leader of leaders.’
- Improving practice, a daily concern.
- Improving practice dependent upon evidence.
- Creating conditions and supports for quality instruction.
Core Beliefs Foundational to This Work

**Instructional Leadership:**

- Is learning-focused.
- Resides with a team with the principal serving as “leader of leaders.”
- Requires a culture of public practice and reflective practice.
- Addresses cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic, and learning diversity.
- Focuses on the management of people, processes, and resources.
What is the Work of Instructional Leaders?
Four Dimensions of Instructional Leadership
# 4 Dimensions of Instructional Leadership

**Instructional Leadership Framework Version 1.0**

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<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Vision</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Vision, Mission and Culture Building</strong></td>
<td>• Through collaboration and shared leadership, staff, students and the school community embrace a vision of academic success for every student.</td>
<td>1. What do the school’s environment and day-to-day interactions among students, staff and families say about what is valued in the school community?</td>
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<td>• School leaders foster a culture of learning, cultural responsiveness and high expectations for every student and every adult.</td>
<td>2. How does the school leadership communicate and drive the school’s instructional agenda?</td>
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<td>• School leaders create and maintain a results-focused learning environment of continuous improvement that is responsive to individual students’ needs and the diversity among the students.</td>
<td>3. How does the school leadership organize the learning environment to respond to cultural and linguistic diversity and the varying learning and social needs of students?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Improvement of Instructional Practice</strong></td>
<td>• School leaders use data, evidence and inquiry to analyze student learning as well as to assess both teacher and leadership practice.</td>
<td>4. How do the school leadership and community use evidence of student success and learning needs to drive collaboration?</td>
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<td>• School leaders use a research-based instructional framework to:</td>
<td>5. How does the school leadership encourage leadership within others?</td>
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<td>– Observe teacher practice.</td>
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<td>– Engage in cycles of inquiry.</td>
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<td>– Plan individual and collective professional development and coaching needs.</td>
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<td>• School leaders use data and evidence of student learning and teacher practice to inform feedback to teachers.</td>
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| **Allocation of Resources**       | School leaders use financial resources, time, facilities, technology and partnerships innovatively and equitably to accomplish the goal of powerful teaching and learning for all students. | 1. How is the distribution of resources (i.e., time, money, technology, space, materials and expertise) related to improved teaching and learning in this school? What evidence do you have?  
2. How do school leaders use instructional coaches, mentors and other teacher leaders to help improve instructional practice?  
3. How are decisions made about staff allocation and student interventions to ensure that the varying needs of students are met?  
4. How do school leaders use staff time and collaborative structures to drive the instructional program? |
| School leaders allocate resources strategically so that instructional practice and student learning continue to improve. | • The principal and leadership team have articulated clear processes and procedures for instructional support.  
• School leaders use data to make equitable decisions about the allocation of resources. |                                                                                                                                                    |
| **Management of People and Processes** | School leaders strategically recruit, hire/retain, induct, support and develop the most qualified staff as well as engage in succession planning. | 1. What evidence exists that the school leadership implements strategic efforts to recruit, hire/retain, induct, support and develop the best staff?  
2. What data and processes does the school leadership use in planning for instructional and school improvement planning?  
3. What evidence exists of the staff’s access to professional growth opportunities? |
| School leaders engage in strategic personnel management and develop working environments in which teachers have full access to supports that help improve instruction. | • Instructional leaders employ critical processes such as planning, implementing, advocating, supporting, communicating and monitoring to all leadership responsibilities including curriculum, instruction and school improvement planning.  
• Instructional leaders create supportive working environments, which include professional development opportunities, time and space for collaboration, and access to professional learning communities. |                                                                                                                                                    |
Vision, Mission and Culture Building

- Shared vision of academic success.
- Culture of learning, high expectations and cultural responsiveness.
- Results-focused environment.
Improvement of Instructional Practice

- Use of a research-based instructional framework for the observation, analysis, and feedback on instruction.
- Use of data to analyze student learning.
- Use of data and evidence to inform feedback to teachers.
Allocation of Resources

**Instructional Leaders:**

- Use resources strategically (money, time, facilities, technology, partnerships).
- Articulate clear processes to support curriculum, instruction.
- Use data to make equitable decisions about the allocation of resources.
Management of People and Processes

Instructional Leaders:

- Strategically recruit, hire/retain, induct, and develop staff.
- Manage processes such as planning, implementation, communication, and monitoring.
- Create time and space for collaboration and planning.
Instructional Leadership

I. Vision, Mission, and Culture-building.

II. Improvement of Instructional Practice.

III. Allocation of Resources.

IV. Management of People and Processes.
Let’s Compare!

- Similarities?
- Differences?
On average, what percentage of their time do principals spend on instructional leadership activities?

- Principals spend an average of **8-17%** of their time (3-5 hours per week) in instructional leadership activities.

- Some of this work lacks the focus needed to improve instruction.
Challenges

- Lack of time and opportunity to learn the essential knowledge and skills.
- Growing demands of the job.
- Confusion about which instructional leadership practices have the highest leverage.
What Do Principals Identify as the Greatest Barrier to Their Being True Instructional Leaders?

→ Time
How Do Central Office Leaders Support the Work of Instructional Leaders?
The Principal Support Framework:

Three Action Areas of Principal Support
Three Action Areas for Central Office

I. Define instructional leadership for your district.

II. Develop principals as instructional leaders.

III. Make the job of principal possible.
How Can Central Office Help Make the Job of Principal “Possible”?

- Assign a leader to support principals with this work.
- Protect principals’ time.
- Help principals find tasks they can ‘take off of their plates.’
- Function as a service center for schools.
- Provide differentiated support to schools.
Resources

  - Craig Jerald, President, Break the Curve Consulting

- Leading for Effective Teaching: Toolkit for Supporting Principal Success.
For Your Consideration

- Has your district articulated a clear vision and developed common language for quality instruction?
- Are there clear descriptions of what your school leaders should do to improve instruction?
- Has your district operationalized its vision of instructional leadership in policy, practice, support and resource?
- What is central office doing to create time and clear the way so principals can be effective instructional leaders?
Questions?
COMING SOON ...

CEL Webinar
April 25, 2013, 10 a.m. Pacific
Beyond Principal Supervision — How Central Offices Lead for Principal Performance.

Summer Leadership Institute
July 9-10, 2013
Seattle, Washington

www.k-12leadership.org
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