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Leverage Leadership:
A Practical Guide to Building Exceptional Schools
By Paul Bambrick-Santoyo (Jossey-Bass, 2012)

S.O.S.   (A Summary of the Summary)

The main idea of the book is:
The most exceptional school leaders succeed because of how they *use their time* --
by spending it on what matters most: instructional leadership.

Why I chose this book
With *Leverage Leadership*, Paul Bambrick-Santoyo has written the *Good to Great* for educational leaders.

For a decade, Bambrick-Santoyo worked with thousands of school leaders and observed how exceptional leaders brought schools from "mediocre" or "good" all the way to "great." From this work, he was able to identify **seven areas of school leadership** that dramatically improve student learning.

He calls these seven areas "**levers**" because the exceptional leaders were able to "leverage" *significantly* more student learning out of each school day by using these seven strategies.

While there are many books that describe the characteristics of effective schools (set high expectations!) or effective school leaders (distribute leadership!) none of them come close to describing exactly what a leader must **_do_** to succeed. What stands out about this book is that Paul is a practitioner (he's a former principal himself), so he thinks through the steps principals would need to follow *to become* great. He goes to a lot of trouble to describe the *precise actions* of top leaders. (Spoiler alert -- he's big on lists!)

He also provides leaders with **useful tools** to help them implement the seven strategies in their schools. Not only does he include sample schedules, calendars, rubrics, and templates, he also provides two more significant tools:

(1) A DVD accompanies the book with *actual* (not staged) leaders demonstrating each of the levers described in the book
(2) All of the PD materials you need to train your leadership team and others in the principles in this book -- over 50 pages of PD workshops (in the book) along with PD scripts, videos, and PowerPoint presentations on the DVD as well

I like the book because it provides leaders with the actual tools they need to *become* a better leader, not just read about one.

***Two notes: First, there is no way to summarize over 50 pages of PD workshops so I did not even attempt to try. Second, sit down to read this when you have *extra time* because this summary is several pages longer than my typical summaries.

The Scoop (In this summary you will learn…)

√ *How exceptional school leaders* CHOOSE *to spend their time makes all the difference*
√ *How teachers can develop as much in* **one year** *as most do* **in twenty**
√ *How to change your teacher observations so the focus is not to* **judge***, but to* **coach** *teachers to improve student learning*
√ *How to ensure that professional development translates into real improvements in student learning*
√ *How to build a* **great student and staff culture** *whether you are a charismatic leader or a quiet lover of English literature*
√ *How to turnaround your leadership team meetings so you train your leadership staff to be better* **instructional leaders**

Introduction

Exceptional school leaders succeed because of how they use their time: what they do, and how and when they do it
Paul Bambrick-Santoyo opens his book with a description of principal Julie Jackson. She started an elementary school in impoverished Newark with 80 kindergarteners, only one of whom can read. After a year of joyful and focused learning, not only did her students catch up, but they surpassed their peers in ELA and math. In fact, after five years of operating, the students in her school scored higher than 99 percent of the students in the United States and experts from Chile to China came to study her school.

Does she have superhuman leadership powers? No, she succeeds because of *how she uses her time*. This becomes clear because Julie helped *another* leader, one with a very different leadership personality and tone, start an elementary school. This leader learned how to make the same successful choices about her use of time and this second school also attained astounding results with students scoring in the 99th percentile on the TerraNova in language and math and the 99th percentile in reading.

In the past decade, the research has made clear just how important *great teaching* is for student effectiveness. High-quality instruction is *more important* than many other factors such as building logistics or school technology. Yes, great teaching leads to great learning. But think about how rare it is to find schools where great teaching is *happening in every classroom*. Why is this? Because we have not yet defined a model of school leadership that would lead to great teaching in every classroom. There is research on effective schools, but it does not describe the *precise leadership actions* that were taken to get there.

After spending ten years working with thousands of school leaders, Bambrick-Santoyo has identified the specific actions that exceptional leaders prioritize on a minute-by-minute and day-by-day basis. This book captures the priorities of these excellent school leaders – those leaders who not only produced excellent results, but who put effective systems in place so that other leaders were equally able to achieve those results when the original leaders left.

By observing how school leaders brought a school from either "mediocre" or "good" all the way to "great," Bambrick-Santoyo was able to identify **seven common areas of school leadership** that improved student learning. He calls each of these seven areas a "lever" because the school leaders intentionally leveraged significantly more student learning from each minute of the day by using these strategies. In this book, Bambrick-Santoyo introduces us to some of these outstanding leaders and how they used the seven levers below to bring their schools to "great."

<u>What is in the Book?</u>
In Part 1 (Instruction) and Part 2 (Culture) each of the first seven chapters focuses on one of the seven levers:

Instructional Levers	1. *Data-driven instruction* 2. *Observation and feedback* 3. *Instructional planning* 4. *Professional development*
Cultural Levers	5. *Student culture* 6. *Staff culture* 7. *Managing school leadership teams*

Part 3 (Execution) helps school leaders put the ideas of the book into action. Part 4 (Professional Development Workshops) includes all of the materials a school leader needs (handouts, PowerPoint slides, videos) to help develop leadership at your school or your district. Because this is just a summary, it does not include these detailed workshops; you will need to purchase the book to obtain these materials. Furthermore, to help you visualize the leadership strategies described, there is a DVD that accompanies this book with video clips of real (not staged) leaders in action.

PART I -- INSTRUCTION

Chapter 1 – Data-Driven Instruction (1st Lever)

***Note** that this chapter, in 38 pages, summarizes what Paul Bambrick-Santoyo wrote in his first book in over 250 pages. If you want a fuller understanding of the concepts of data-driven instruction, read his book (and/or The Main Idea's summary), *Driven by Data*.

Shifting the focus from, "Did we teach it?" to "Did the students learn it?"
In the opening vignette of this chapter we are directed to watch a video clip of an instructional leader, Beth, conducting a data analysis meeting with 11th grade English teacher, Steve. In the 90-second excerpt, Beth guides Steve to a strategy that will improve his instruction. In a half-hour meeting, she will have guided him to 9 or 10 strategies such as integrating nonfiction articles into novel units and teaching the difference between tone and topic. By the end of the year Steve will have gained 30 to 40 new instructional tools from meetings just like this one. In fact, his teaching will have improved so dramatically, that although in the previous year only 11% of his students passed the Advanced Placement exam, over four years that percentage will rise to 60%.

These half-hour meetings (called **data-analysis meetings**) lie at the heart of *data-driven instruction* -- the **first lever** of effective school leadership. It is such an important lever (he calls it a super-lever) that Bambrick-Santoyo wrote his entire first book on this topic alone. In this chapter he writes, "I am convinced that data-driven instruction is the **single most effective** use of a school leader's time." He has spent 10 years working with leaders across the country who have found that putting this simple principle to work has led to dramatic results in their schools. However, data-driven instruction involves a lot more than a 30-minute meeting between a teacher and an instructional leader. Data-driven instruction includes an entire system of giving regular interim assessments, analyzing the results of those assessments, and adjusting instruction based on those results. The reason this lever fundamentally transforms schools is that it changes the conversation from, "Did we teach it?" to "Did the students learn it?" Below are the four keys to put this system in place.

Keys to Data-Driven Instruction
1. Assessment: Define the roadmap for rigor.
2. Analysis: Determine where students are struggling and why.
3. Action: Implement new teaching plans to respond to this analysis.
4. Systems: Create systems and procedures to ensure continual data-driven improvement.

Key 1 – *Assessment:* **Define the roadmap for rigor.**
While many people think it is the *standards* that will help teachers increase the rigor at their schools, it is actually the *assessments* that will. To give an example, the following standard is taken from the Common Core State Standards:

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings.

This standard is *not* specific enough to show how rigorous instruction should be. From this *same* standard, one teacher teaching *Macbeth* might give students a <u>simple</u> vocabulary question on a quiz while another might give much more <u>challenging</u> one like this:

The description of Macbeth's "barren sceptre" contributes to the unity of the passage in which of the following ways?
    A.   As a parallel between Macbeth's possible children and Banquo's possible children
    B.   As a satirical comment on challenges Macbeth will face with infertility
    C.   A comparison between Macbeth's strong formal authority and his lack of popular influence
    D.   As an ironic contrast between Macbeth's power and his inability to produce future kings

This shows how it is actually the *assessment* that defines the rigor of the instruction. Standards mean very little until you decide how to assess them. For this reason, the *assessments* dictate the rigor and the assessments should be created first.

In the most highly-effective schools, the assessments used were: (1) interim, (2) common, and (3) aligned. Great schools don't wait until the end of the year, they give regular interim assessments. But they also don't overwhelm students and staff. This means they don't give interim assessments more than four to six times a year. In order to ensure equally high levels of rigor across the board, assessments should be common across all grades and classes. Finally, interim assessments must align to end-of-year assessments (such as state tests) as well as other goals, such as preparing students for college. This means they should be aligned with the AP, IB, or SAT for example. At the middle and elementary levels it's trickier because there are fewer year-end goals. However, the leaders in this book aimed for above-level proficiency for their students. They introduced algebra earlier and set higher goals for reading level targets (such as the Fountas and Pinnell reading levels aimed for in each grade).

Key 2 – *Analysis:* **Determine where students are struggling and why.**
Effective leaders, do *not* pop in and out of classrooms here and there. Rather, top leaders, as mentioned earlier, use their time most efficiently by conducting data-analysis meetings – discussing the results of a teacher's latest interim assessment results with the teacher. However, in order for analysis of assessment results to be effective, the analysis needs to be deep. Imagine a soccer coach skipping the game and simply reading the paper to see if her team won or lost. If that were the case, the best advice she could give would be too general, "Work harder." The same is true for leaders who only look at an entire class's assessment scores. Below are some ideas to ask deeper questions and conduct more effective data-analysis meetings.

Elements of an Effective Analysis Meeting: **First** of all, both teachers and instructional leaders need to *trained* before doing these meetings. All of the materials needed to conduct these trainings can be found in *Driven by Data.* **Then**, to make these meetings fruitful, assessments should be scored as rapidly as possible, preferably within 48 hours, even if this means getting volunteers, support staff, or having a half-day of school. **Third**, data must be organized clearly enough to glean some meaning from them. Using a template that serves as a one-page summary of the data that shows how students are performing at the *student level, skill/standard level, question level,* and *whole class level* is vital. There is a sample on p. 38 of the book and on the DVD. **Finally**, the analysis done at the meetings must be <u>deep</u>. On pages 40, 41, and 45, there are some sample questions you can use to analyze the data with a teacher, a few of which are excerpted below. For additional questions, see "Leading Effective Analysis Meetings" on the DVD.

    • Did students all choose the same wrong answer? Why or why not?
    • What were the steps students needed to be able to do to answer this question correctly? Where did their mastery break down?
    • On questions that measured the same standard/skill, did students perform better on some questions than others? Why?
    • Are there questions that only struggling students got wrong?

Part of the key is for the teacher and instructional leader to analyze the data independently *before* the meeting. This way they both come to the table having spent time looking through the data and analyzing it and will be more prepared. For example, if the leader knows the data well, he might ask, "What's so interesting is that they did really well on question number ___ but struggled with question number ___ on the same standard. Why do you think that is?" Furthermore, teachers also should be expected to create an *action plan* (discussed below in the third key) for next steps as a result of analyzing the data and bring this to the meeting as well.

Key 3 – *Action:* Implement new teaching plans to respond to this analysis.
Even the most in-depth analysis is useless if it is not followed up with concrete action steps. Effective leaders make sure that actual changes in classroom instruction result from all analysis meetings. Action plans will be discussed more thoroughly in chapters 2 and 3, but as part of the data analysis meeting the leader should have the teacher write down additional ideas for action plans *during the meeting* (you can see examples of this on video clips 1 and 2).

Key 4 – *Systems:* Create systems and procedures to ensure continual data-driven improvement.
The final key needed for successful data-driven instruction is *a system* to put all the pieces into place. Data-driven analysis cannot occur without having regular time for assessment, analysis, and action. To accomplish this, the principal needs to plan his or her calendar around these priority areas. This means scheduling interim assessments 6 – 8 weeks apart, time for scoring and creating data reports within 48 hours, time for analyzing that data and conducting data meetings, and time for reteaching and implementing action steps. There is a sample interim assessment calendar on p.49 and chapter 8 includes more details about creating calendars.

Chapter 2 – Observation and Feedback (2nd Lever)

After the two "super-levers" data-driven instruction (Chapter 1) and student culture (which will be described in Chapter 5), the next most effective lever leaders should focus on is **observation and feedback**. Bambrick-Santoyo begins each chapter with a vignette and often a video clip to illustrate each lever. In this chapter he describes Principal Julie Jackson meeting face-to-face to give a third-grade teacher, Carly, feedback after a fifteen-minute observation.

Julie noticed that when students struggled, Carly lowered her expectations of them instead of pushing them and maintaining the rigor. After praising Carly's progress, Julie asks, "Carly, what happened with Simon when you called on him to answer a question about mammals?" Carly thinks and then responds that, "He couldn't think of an example of a mammal." Julie proceeds, "Right. And what was your next prompt after that?" Julie responds, "I asked someone else to give me an example." Julie continues, "What does that do to Simon's ability to master the problem?" Carly slowly answers, "It makes it… too easy." Julie nods. "Yes! So you reduce the rigor too quickly! That's what I want to get at today. When you're prompting, you want to maintain the rigor…" (p.60)

Julie helps Carly figure out that she could have asked Simon to define what a mammal is rather than moving to another student. This feedback session continues with Carly not only practicing maintaining the rigor in questioning, but also with Carly writing questions into tomorrow's lessons in places where students may struggle in order to ensure that she will not lower the level of her questioning.

How is this different from the way schools have traditionally done observation and feedback? There are two essential differences. One, the focus of the meetings is *not* to *evaluate* the lesson but rather to *coach* teachers on how to improve. Two, rather than only having one or two observations a year, these leaders observe teachers and give feedback *every week*. This is an important change. The primary purpose is no longer to simply *judge* teachers, now it is to *coach* them to improve student learning. Imagine if a tennis coach only watched a tennis player twice a year and wrote a detailed report after each visit. Teachers, like tennis players, need frequent observations and feedback along with opportunities to practice and improve. The successful leaders in this book commit to 15-minute observations and 15-minute feedback meetings for every teacher every week. **By receiving weekly observations and feedback, a teacher develops as much in one year as most teachers do in twenty.** There are **four key components** to the ways the outstanding school leaders in this book conduct the **observation and feedback** cycle:

Keys to Observation and Feedback
1. *Scheduled observations*: Lock in frequent and regular observations.
2. *Key action steps*: Identify the one or two most important areas for growth.
3. *Effective feedback*: Schedule time for and give direct face-to-face feedback that practices specific action steps.
4. *Direct accountability*: Create systems to ensure feedback translates to practice.

Key 1 – *Scheduled observations*: Lock in frequent and regular observations.
If leaders want to provide regular feedback to teachers like coaches do, they need to be in classrooms regularly. To do this they must keep visits short – around 15 minutes. Furthermore, they must lock these observation times into their schedules and plan other events *around* these priorities. It helps to group several observations together for hour-long blocks of observations. Also, in schools with more than 20 teachers the principal does *not* conduct all of the observations; other instructional leaders are trained to help. As the sample principal schedule on p. 12 of the summary shows, this can take up to 25% of a principal's time. However, this time is worth it because it is time that results in *dramatic* improvements in teacher development.

Key 2 – *Key action steps***: Identify the one or two most important areas for growth.**
Because an instructional leader is now observing each teacher weekly, that leader no longer needs to provide a "laundry list" of what went wrong with the lesson. Instead, the leader can focus on one or two key areas to improve over the next week. Furthermore, people are able to internalize feedback much more effectively if it is given in small pieces. Make sure the action steps you suggest can be accomplished in one week; focus on small changes. Although "bite-sized" action steps may seem small, they can make a large impact over time. For example, one teacher was struggling to engage her students at the beginning of the school year. Principal Julie Jackson gave her one to two pieces of "bite-sized" feedback about engagement for eight weeks (see these suggestions on p.76) and by getting her students more engaged in their learning, this teacher helped them learn enough to score at the 99th percentile on the TerraNova.

But how does the leader know where to begin with feedback? First, the focus should be on *student* learning and the leader's familiarity with the interim assessment results can help with this. In the case with Julie and Carly earlier, Julie was aware that Carly's students struggled with "high-rigor" questions. Second, the leader needs to know which action steps will have the most impact. This often comes from experience with classroom instruction. Julie has her own "Top 10" list of action steps on pp.73-75 that help teachers increase student engagement and rigor. One way to become more knowledgeable about classroom instruction is to read literature that the leaders in this book cite such as *The Skillful Teacher* and *Teach Like a Champion.* (Note that The Main Idea has summaries of both.) What is most important is to be knowledgeable enough to provide teachers with *precise* action steps to improve their teaching. *Naming* the next action step is key; with vague action steps teachers are left alone to figure out what to do. Try the exercise below.

> **Your Turn**: Convert *Vague* Action Steps (Feedback to Teachers) into *Precise* Action Steps
> *Instructions:* Read each scenario and the suggested **VAGUE** action step while *covering the* **PRECISE** action step with your hand. Can you think of your own concrete, bite-sized, action step? Then look at the precise action step suggested and compare it to yours.
>
> *Scenario 1*: Students are talking while the teacher is giving directions.
> • *Vague action step:* Reduce student talking when you're speaking.
> • *Precise action step:* Don't talk over the students. Stop and make eye contact with the student who is talking. Throughout the lesson walk with purpose toward students who may have a hard time staying on task.
>
> *Scenario 2:* Students never get enough time to practice the skill independently.
> • *Vague action step:* Be careful about your pacing so as not to sacrifice independent practice.
> • *Precise action step:* Set a timer to go off with 20 minutes left in the lesson to remind you to begin independent practice.

Key 3 – *Effective feedback***: Schedule time for and give direct face-to-face feedback.**
While an instructional leader must be clear in his or her mind what action steps will help the teacher improve instruction, unless the leader can *deliver* that message effectively, it will be useless. Below is an overview of how to deliver effective feedback:

> **Step 1:** Give precise praise connected to the previous feedback – If possible, praise an action the teacher implemented from the *previous* class observation. This gives the teacher positive reinforcement for implementing the feedback discussed and provides built-in accountability.
> **Step 2:** Ask a probing question about the core issue – Teachers will buy into conclusions they've reached *themselves* more than directives about how to change. To do this, it helps for the leader to start with a question, but not an overly general question like, "How did your lesson go today?" Instead, start with a narrow question that focuses on the aspect of the lesson that needs to be improved – such as questioning, transitions, pacing, etc.
> **Step 3:** Identify the problem and the concrete action step -- In an ideal situation, the teacher may be able to define the problem and articulate a concrete action step to address that problem. However, less experienced teachers may need the leader to ask additional scaffolded questions or present evidence of what he or she observed in class in order to articulate the problem. Only if all else fails should the *leader* state the problem directly. This model is effective because having *teachers* engage in the weekly habit of examining their errors and making plans to improve them the following week develops *reflective teachers* who will continue critiquing themselves regularly and continue this cycle of improvement even when they are *not* being observed.
> **Step 4:** Practice -- The effective leaders in this book have learned that great teaching does not come from discussions; it comes from doing. For this reason, they build in time for in-the-moment practice during these feedback sessions. This certainly is *not* customary in most schools. However, these top tier leaders often have teachers role play a new change or practice asking questions. "What might you do in order to make sure that your prompts split complex questions into smaller parts to guide students?" The same way teachers have students practice, these top leaders have teachers practice as well. You can see examples of leaders having teachers practice skills on the DVD.
> **Step 5:** Plan Ahead -- To ensure that suggestions for changes in teacher practice won't be lost, teachers write them into their future lesson plans where appropriate along with a timeline for implementation.

Key 4 – *Direct accountability***: Create systems to ensure feedback translates to practice.**
How do you ensure that feedback gets turned into practice? Observation and feedback are only *fully effective* when leaders **systematically track** which teachers have been observed, what feedback they have received, and whether that feedback has improved their practice. To do this, some of the leaders in the book use an ***observation tracker*** which is simply an Excel document to help record weekly observations and teacher improvements. Most importantly, this tool helps leaders keep track of:

What has each teacher been working to improve for months? Which goals have already been met?
What pedagogical challenges are problems for the whole school? Just the math department? Just the new teachers?
Who are the teachers you are avoiding observing? Whom do you always see?
What feedback is solving the problem? What's falling flat?

Each Excel document has multiple tabs: one tab for each individual teacher and a final summary tab that serves as a schoolwide tracker that provides overall facts about each teacher such as the total number of times you've observed, the latest observation date, the PD goals, and the latest action steps. An excerpt of an individual tab is below (see pp.94-95 for a complete example).

Date	Time/Class	Action Steps (small, measurable, targeted)	Evidence of Change from Previous Observation	Things I'm Impressed by
10/12	Social Studies	1. During the Do Now, circulate with purpose. Walk by the students who need proximity or who need help with understanding. 2. Give think time after asking a critical thinking question.	Pacing has improved during opening procedures.	
		1. Lower your voice when you are working one on one with a student so you do not distract the rest of your group who is working independently.	1. You now circulate with purpose…	

Educators may be skeptical of observation and feedback because the way it has traditionally been implemented is very different from the way it has been introduced in this chapter. If the leader can make it crystal clear that the purpose of these weekly cycles of observation, feedback, and action steps is to coach and improve teaching *not* to evaluate, this may help with teacher resistance. However, the greatest antidote to the resistance will be when teachers see their practice slowly improving week after week.

Note that although **observation and feedback** will take about 11.5 hours a week of a leader's time, (see the sample schedule on p. 12 in the summary), the goal is to utilize leaders other than the principal to serve as instructional leaders so that each leader only oversees 15 teachers. Furthermore, the feedback meetings also serve as *planning* meetings as will be described in the next chapter.

Chapter 3 – Planning (3rd Lever)

At Roxbury Prep, a middle school outside of Boston, every teacher – veteran or new — meets with the principal to review his or her yearlong curriculum plan in the weeks before school starts. These meetings focus on two essential questions: (1) *What* do students need to be able to do? and (2) *How* will we be able to get them to do it? These are intense meetings and the teachers must make crucial choices about what to teach and how to teach it. For most of us in education a focus on teacher planning and these questions do not sound new. Many educators have read and use McTighe and Wiggins's *Understanding by Design*.

However, something is very different about planning at Roxbury Prep and you can tell from their incredible results. For the past five years their results on the challenging Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) has been phenomenal. Last year 98% of their students scored proficient and advanced proficient in English which placed them among the top ten schools in the state. Their math scores tied them for being the number one middle school in the state.

So what's *different* about their planning? The difference is their *systematic* approach to curricular planning. Rather than planning on their own, all teachers meet with an instructional leader before the school year to review their comprehensive curricular plan and regularly throughout the school year to continue to plan with this leader. This chapter focuses on both yearly and weekly planning.

1. YEARLY CURRICULUM PLANNING: Teaching the Right Content
If you are a leader in a district with a mandated curriculum and pacing guide then you should skip this section. If you have some autonomy around curricular planning, then you should help guide your teachers in addressing the two core questions outlined below:

(1) *What do students need to be able to do at the end of each unit?* – When thinking about the yearlong curriculum, remember from earlier in the book that standards are *not* specific enough to show teachers how rigorous their instruction must be. Instead they must look at the year-end *assessments* to determine how the standards are being defined. At Roxbury Prep they look at the year-end assessments to design curricula. This is far from rote teaching. Instead, their curricula include rigorous skills such as complex research writing to analyzing nonfiction texts. Some veteran teachers only need to look at examples of year-end assessments to decide what students need to be able to do in their yearlong curricula, while newer teachers will need help from instructional leaders.

(2) *How can we get them there?* -- Once teachers are clear about *what* students need to learn to master the year-end assessments, then they are ready to map out units, activities, and objectives. The exceptional leaders did *not* use one consistent format for yearly curriculum plans, but they all spent significant time reviewing plans, looking at core issues such as:
   • *Alignment between activities and objectives* – Make sure the activities are rigorous enough to meet the end-goal assessments.
   • *Pedagogical order* – Some skills are needed to build other skills so be aware of the order in which skills are taught.
   • *What's left out and what's kept in* – Given there isn't time to teach everything, consider the topics that have been cut and kept.
   • *Activities over objectives* – Consider whether teachers chose an activity just because it's fun whether or not it meets the goal.

2. WEEKLY AND DAILY LESSON PLANNING: Ensuring Accountability

In addition to reviewing each teacher's yearlong curricular plan, part of what fuels the *systemic approach* throughout the year are the weekly planning meetings between each individual teacher and an instructional leader. While it may sound impossible to fit any more time into a leader's schedule, school leaders use the 30-minute time slot that has already been blocked out for giving the teacher feedback on his or her lesson (see the sample leader schedule on p. 12 of the summary). Since planning and teaching go hand in hand there should be no problem with devoting approximately 10 minutes of the meeting to observation feedback and about 20 minutes of the meeting to lesson planning. Below are three suggestions to help leaders use those 20 minutes productively:

1. *Map out the week* – This is not necessary for veteran teachers, but newer teachers may need help carrying over standards that were not mastered from the previous week or looking for changes to the schedule due to school events.
2. *Set the core content* -- This may sound simple, but this is the step that involves looking at student learning to see how much students have learned – Should you spend more time teaching certain objectives because of student misunderstandings or should you speed up in certain areas that students mastered more quickly?
3. *Dive into key lessons* – Pick one key lesson to help the teacher plan from the objective to the activities – perhaps a lesson that is key to student understanding or for a new teacher a lesson that might lead to management problems.

Chapter 4 – Professional Development (4th Lever)

Everyone has experienced a great professional development (PD) session led by a charismatic leader who told funny jokes and engaged the participants. However, once the workshop was over, not a single change was put into place. *Effective* professional development should *not* be judged by how engaging it is but by how much it improves teacher practice and therefore student learning. This chapter zeroes in on the work of Aja Settles and leaders like her who have learned how to create professional development workshops that get results. Aja has created a series of professional development workshops around every aspect of K-4 literacy that have helped to improve literacy in elementary schools across the country. In order to plan PD that translates to results, leaders must consider three areas as they plan:

(1) *What to teach:* Follow the data. Focus PD on areas that will improve student results.
(2) *How to teach:* Lead the training effectively. Actively engage teachers in the skills they need.
(3) *How to make it stick:* Hold teachers accountable through systems that guarantee that PD is genuinely implemented.

(1) What to Teach: Follow the data

The best professional development starts with a clear knowledge of what teachers need. The people who are best able to determine what teachers need are the instructional leaders who are regularly observing teachers and giving them feedback. Instructional leaders can gather three kinds of data to help determine what kinds of problems are common or persistent across classrooms: observational data (from the **observation trackers** in Chapter 2), interim assessment data (presented in Chapter 1 on Data-Driven Instruction), and information about school culture (from school culture rubrics which will be introduced in Chapter 5). From observational data you might determine that a number of your teachers are struggling with checking for understanding so you might plan a session on this topic. Even better, because your data will show which teachers have already mastered this skill, you can excuse them from this workshop and differentiate your PD sessions so you don't waste a teacher's precious time.

After deciding *what* to teach, the next step is to choose a *clear, measurable, bite-sized* objective. The session will not be effective if your goal is too broad, for example, "This session will focus on management." Instead you need a more concrete idea of exactly what you want teachers to do be able to *do* at the end of the session. This may seem simple but it is often where leaders go wrong in planning their PD. Consider these three questions to guide you in planning your PD:
• *Is it actionable?* Does it articulate what teachers will be able to *do* when they walk out of the workshop?
• *Is it evaluable?* Will you be able to easily evaluate whether they accomplished it?
• *Is it feasible?* Can you accomplish this objective in the time that you have allotted?

Your Turn: Convert Vague PD Objectives into Precise, Bite-Sized, PD Objectives
Look at the two examples of **WEAK** objectives below and *cover* the **STRONG** example with your hand.
See if you can come up with a stronger PD objective that is narrower and more doable in a 60-minute session.

Reading	History
Weak: Too Broad	**Weak: Too Broad**
Teach reading effectively.	*Understand the importance of primary source documents in the teaching of history.*
Weak: Still Too Broad	**Weak: Still Too Broad**
Teach guided reading effectively.	*Use primary source documents in history class.*
Strong: Specific and Bite-Sized	**Strong: Specific and Bite-Sized**
Teach two strategies for decoding.	*Teach the S.P.R.I.T.E. (Social, Political, Religious, Intellectual, Technological, Economic) technique for interpreting a primary source document.*

(2) How to Teach: Living the Learning

In an effective PD session the leader might have participants examine a case study, watch a video clip, write down ideas and then discuss and share those ideas. In fact, during a 30 minute-segment of a PD session, an effective leader would say very little. The goal is to get the *participants* to do the majority of the thinking and talking. In the same way that pilots don't learn to fly by watching a PowerPoint, teachers also don't learn by PowerPoint – instead they learn by "living the learning." "Living the Learning" is a framework for designing effective PD workshops that consists of the following five components:

      A. *Airtight activities*: Airtight activities help participants independently reach the key ideas.
      B. *Sharing*: Participants need time to process and discuss the airtight activities and formulate conclusions.
      C. *Framing*: The leader assigns formal language to the audience's conclusions.
      D. *Application*: Time is allotted for participants to begin to put activities into practice.
      E. *Reflection*: Time is set aside for participants to take notes and gather their thoughts.

A. ***Airtight Activities*** -- Rather than lecturing at teachers, it is far more powerful to provide them with activities or experiences that will let them come to their own conclusions. Some sample "airtight activities" might include a short video clip, a case study, or a role-play. To show you how much more powerful than a PowerPoint these airtight activities can be, the author, Paul Bambrick-Santoyo, shares an example of a role play he used in a workshop he conducted with a group of school leaders. He wanted to teach the objective that leaders should *not* lecture teachers during data analysis meetings. He could have presented this via PowerPoint but instead he showed a role-play of himself as the school leader lecturing someone role-playing a teacher. When the participant who played the teacher was asked how he felt being lectured to he replied, "I was angry." The audience of school leaders had a much more emotional and visceral response than if they had just watched a PowerPoint. As a result, they would be much more likely to *avoid* lecturing teachers after this. Note that it is important to keep the clip/video short and to guide the participants toward what to look for, "As you watch this role-play, pay close attention to the way the teacher responds when the school leader starts lecturing him about…"

B. ***Sharing*** – To make sure that each individual teacher is doing the learning him or herself, include time for everyone to process the airtight activity before jumping to larger group reflections in which only a few people get to participate. You can do this by having everyone write individually or share with a partner or small group. Then when you move to large group sharing everyone will have had a chance to do the learning individually – a step that is often skipped in adult learning. When you get to large group sharing some key points may have been missed. An effective presenter brings a set of scaffolded questions to elicit all the key points rather than simply telling the group this information and depriving them of the chance to learn it in a deeper way.

C. ***Framing*** – Once someone has produced the correct answer, the leader must frame it in more formal language and perhaps display it for everyone to see. It is important for everyone to use the same common formal language when referring to a new technique learned so it becomes a part of the faculty's vocabulary. Think of how much easier it is to talk about a "Do Now" rather than "a brief activity we do at the beginning of class to get all students focused on the learning of the day."

D. ***Application*** – This is the step that makes the difference between PD that is enjoyable and PD that has an impact. It is here that teachers actually *practice* what they have learned. Practice usually involves either *modifying lesson plans* – such as improving objectives or lesson plans – or *role playing* – perhaps to improve classroom techniques such as correcting student misconduct.

E. ***Reflection*** – Neurological research shows the importance of giving people time to reflect on their learning to make sure it sticks. Effective leaders give teachers frequent time – before a role play to script out their lines, after watching a video, etc. – to jot down notes and conclusions. It is helpful to provide a colorful sheet for participants to record their biggest takeaways.

(3) How to Make It Stick: Accountability

The whole purpose of professional development is to change teacher practice. To do this, leaders need to have systems to ensure that PD is implemented. Fortunately, the instructional systems mentioned in this book *already* serve this purpose so *no new systems* are needed. By *observing* teachers you can look for evidence that PD is being implemented. By *meeting* with teachers to plan you can support them by finding ways to integrate newly learned skills into future lessons. Furthermore, interim assessment results will show the impact these new teacher practices are having on student learning. These are the most effective and ongoing ways to ensure that teachers are using what they are learning in PD. As Aja Settles, the school leader mentioned earlier in the chapter says, "My PD is only really successful if we can be in classrooms the next day, and a month, two months, four months from now and see the new skills at work. When that happens, and when we can make sure that happens, that's when we see real change."

Chapter 5 – Student Culture (5th Lever)

While the first four levers focus on maximizing the effectiveness of *teachers*, then the fifth lever – student culture – is about helping students develop the habits that will allow their learning to shine. At Rochester Prep Elementary, Principal Stacey Shells has created just such a student culture. Every minute feels urgent, as if learning were a precious and valuable resource. For example, there is the sense that the more time lost to transitioning between activities and hanging up coats, the less time there would be for seventh graders to critique the symbolism in *Animal Farm* or for second graders to do division. While this sense of urgency to transition quickly might seem trivial, this can add up to a lot of time lost if a teacher passes out papers 20 times a day and it takes 1 minute and 20 seconds each time. Over the course of a year that would equal **12 lost days of school!** For this reason, in the DVD clips and in the sections to follow, what stands out about leaders who know how to create a school with a very strong school culture is their attention to every detail. They sweat the "small stuff" in order to allow the "big stuff" to happen: poetry, quadratic equations, and mock human rights trials of Spanish explorers. These exceptional leaders employ four key steps to develop a strong student culture.

Step 1. MOVE FROM VISION TO SYSTEM
If you want a strong student culture, it's not enough to give a motivational speech, have a set of school values, and create a vision statement. In most schools, what ends up happening is that most classrooms have their own classroom culture and there is very little consistency across the school. Students quickly catch on to who are the "strict" teachers and who are the "doormats." So how do exceptional leaders create an exceptional school culture?

Building Virtue – If you want students to develop a core set of values, then these must become a *living* part of the school's culture. For example, if <u>responsibility</u> is one of your school's core values, then this needs to be woven into the daily fabric of the school. Faculty praise students for helping others as an example of responsibility. Assemblies are used as an opportunity to teach about and present these values. The point is that the leader must meticulously ensure that the school focuses on the core values regularly.

Building Consistency Through Systems -- To ensure school-wide consistency in student culture, ultra-successful schools have the same routines, expectations, and consequences in *every* classroom. Below are some areas that are helpful to develop consistent schoolwide practices for, along with questions to help think through all of the details necessary in implementing them successfully:

Daily Routines	In-Class Routines
• Morning routines (arrival, breakfast, transition to class) • Assemblies • Lunch and recess • Class-to-class transitions • Dismissal and after school	• Opening procedures • In-class transitions • Strategies and consequences for students off task • Bathroom signals
To make these routines happen consistently throughout the school, we must be able to answer four key questions:	
1. What is the leader doing? 2. What are the teachers doing?	3. What are the students doing? 4. What will happen immediately when a student doesn't comply?

To give an example of the level of planning that went into *one* of these routines, below is an *excerpt* from p.172 of the responses to the 4 questions above (there are *14* bullet points in all) for what to do to transition from breakfast to morning meeting:

Planning the Transition from Breakfast to Morning Meeting
What is the *leader* doing? • Leader signals the beginning of morning meeting. • Leader stands at the entry to the meeting area and greets students, redirects off-task behavior, checks for uniform… etc.
What are the *teachers* doing? • Teachers signal students to stand by giving signal (palms up at waist level, raise both hands up to signal "rising")…etc
What are the *students* doing? • Students walk silently with hands at sides when signaled by their classroom teachers. • Students smile, heads up, and follow the line of tape on the floor to stand in the appropriate spot… etc.
What will happen immediately when a *student doesn't comply*? • If a student is not walking silently or with hands at side, teachers use a nonverbal redirect and/or proximity… etc.

Step 2. PRACTICE: Moving from Aspiration to Mastery
While it certainly helps to plan out routines in detail like above, this is not sufficient to build a strong student culture. First, so that these routines don't seem so daunting, it is helpful for teachers to *see* these routines in action. You can share video clips from the DVD that accompanies this book, or videotape your best teachers, or even yourself! Another vital step in making your vision of student culture a reality is by having teachers *practice* the routines that will be put into place. Practice has been a consistent theme in this book and it is helpful here as well. (There are some video clips, 27 and 28, that show teachers practicing transitions like the one above before the first day of school.) Your first day of school will run much more smoothly if teachers practice all of the first day procedures so school leaders can address any potential problems before they occur.

Step 3. MAINTAIN AND MODEL: Keeping Student Culture on Track

Excellent leaders don't stop once they put systems and routines into place for establishing a strong student culture. They continually monitor and maintain it throughout the year. Part of how they do this is by maintaining a strong presence at the times when student culture has the potential to break down. For example, Principal Stacey Shells says she's usually the one to greet the kids on the bus and to ask the driver about their behavior on the way to school. She also makes sure that she, or another school leader, is always present during breakfast, lunch, and dismissal as well. Her presence sends a strong message to the students: they are responsible for their behavior at all times. Her presence has another benefit as well – she continually models and sets high expectations for how to interact with the students. In order to make this commitment to student culture, school leaders need to lock it into their schedules and treat monitoring student culture as **just as important as any other meeting**. For this reason, student culture should be placed on the leader's schedule for first thing in the morning, lunchtime, and dismissal. See the sample principal schedule on p. 12 of the summary.

Step 4. EVALUATE STUDENT CULTURE

Sometimes a leader has trouble seeing his or her own student culture objectively. For this reason, to ensure that the culture is not slowly declining, it is helpful to create a tool to measure your culture and a system to use it regularly. Stacey uses a rubric that evaluates several aspects of student culture (such as "Student Joy and Engagement") along a 4-point scale (Advanced, Proficient, Working Toward, and Needs Improvement). There is a copy of this rubric on the DVD. Then Stacey schedules a few "culture walkthroughs" with a group of instructional leaders and veteran teachers to use the rubric to evaluate student culture.

Chapter 6 – Staff Culture (6th Lever)

Although Neal is an outstanding teacher who runs a joyful and rigorous classroom, he works incredibly hard and finds teaching to be truly demanding. So why does he stick with it? "This culture, this staff, this school… I wouldn't want to work anywhere else in the world. Even though things were tough, being part of a team like this is what keeps me going." While building culture may initially seem like a "softer" leadership skill, it's actually a crucial component in the outstanding schools featured in this book. Principal Julie Kennedy has created a top middle school in New York City and when asked how, she attributes the school's success to the determination and hard work of her staff. Therefore, there is no question that time spent developing staff culture pays off in spades. Furthermore, it shows that creating a top-tier school does *not* have to mean sacrificing staff happiness. Additionally, when creating a positive culture this does *not* mean you can't hold teachers accountable. In fact, teachers are *more willing* to be held accountable because they feel more trusting, more trusted, and more willing to do the hard work to make their school succeed. So what do leaders, like Julie Kennedy, do to create a strong staff culture? Rather than giving a one-time, charismatic speech, what distinguishes these leaders is that they *consistently* and *systematically* build staff culture throughout the year. Below are five key principles to build a strong staff culture.

> **FIVE STRATEGIES FOR A SUCCESSFUL STAFF CULTURE**
> *1. Set the vision*: Outline a clear vision for the school's work environment.
> *2. Get the right people on the bus*: Hire great people who subscribe to that vision.
> *3. Put a stake in the ground*: Prioritize your commitment to a strong staff culture from day one.
> *4. Put your ear to the rail*: Look and listen for warning signs of negative staff culture coming down the tracks.
> *5. Lather, rinse, repeat*: Be intentional about building, maintaining, and communicating about staff culture throughout the year.

1. Set the vision – **What is the staff culture you want to build?**

It's important to create a staff culture based on *who you are* and *what you genuinely value*. Great staff builders are quite diverse in their approaches. Some approach it with fiery oratory, others with quirky senses of humor and still others with a quiet and steady consistency. If you are more comfortable discussing English literature you don't have to sign up your staff for an adult kickball league to create a cohesive staff culture. In fact, one way to balance out your personality may be to appoint a staff member as "director of fun" to help create the type of workplace that staff look forward to coming to. What is important is that the leader think through a vision for what that workplace will feel like. For example, one outstanding leader built her staff culture around three core ideas. She wanted her staff to feel like they are: (1) on a team; (2) supported by and supporting their colleagues to improve student achievement; and (3) having fun while getting results.

2. Get the right people on the bus – **Are new applicants the right fit for your school?**

It is worth the time and energy to ensure that you hire people who fit with the vision for your school. This is the *most effective* step you can take to create a positive culture. In order to do this, make sure you ask probing questions about *why* the candidate wants to teach at your school. Furthermore, given the great deal of *feedback* given to teachers at schools like the ones described in this book, even *more* important than having candidates teach a sample lesson is to observe *their reaction to the feedback*. Are they willing or even enthusiastic about growing professionally?

3. Put a stake in the ground – **What can you do early in the year to ensure that a strong staff culture gets off to the right start?**
One outstanding leader, Julie Kennedy, says, "Ninety percent of a school year is determined in the first few weeks of school." It is vital that you show your commitment to a strong staff culture as soon as possible. This means that as early as the interview and the hiring process make sure to create a strong first impression. Think through the details such as who will greet the candidate, what questions you will ask to convey your workplace culture, whose classes you will take the candidate to observe, and how you will follow up with the interview. Furthermore, summer training and the first few weeks of the year are a prime time to instill staff culture. Take advantage of this time to weave in ice breakers, teach communication norms, share food, use seating charts to have veteran and new teachers sit together, and plan outings such as a citywide scavenger hunt or Go Kart racing to bring the staff together.

4. Put your ear to the rail – **How can you prevent negativity among staff before it rears its ugly head?**
Long ago people used to put their ears to the rail to hear the train coming before they could see it. You, too, need to continually keep your eyes and ears open to stop negativity before it occurs. One way to do this is through *open communication*. Weekly staff meetings allow staff to come together to work as a team. Weekly individual meetings provide even more time to communicate. Some schools distribute a weekly survey to collect feedback: (1) *What's going well?* (2) *What's one thing that could be going better?* (3) *What's one thing a school leader could do to make your life easier?* (4) A fun question such as, *What is your favorite costume from a past Halloween*? or *What singer would you most like to sound like?* Another way, and probably the number one way that outstanding leaders keep their fingers on the pulse of the staff culture is by being aware of nonverbal and subtle signs that they observe while circulating throughout the school each day. Are teachers arriving on time? Is there a good vibe at meetings? Are staff engaged in meetings? Do staff get quiet when the leader enters a room? Are cliques forming?

If you *do* overhear a negative comment, say, about the school schedule, do *not* lecture the teacher that, "We're positive here." Instead, later, and in private, let the teacher know you heard the comment and ask for feedback about why the teacher didn't come to you – was there something about your tone or style that made it difficult for the teacher to disagree with you. Then be calm, and listen! In general, to help these conversations go more smoothly, make sure to do them *in person* (not over email), *privately* (not in the staff room), keep them *focused on the one issue,* and conduct them *immediately* (new leaders often wait until the next day).

5. Lather, rinse, repeat – **What concrete actions can you take to maintain a positive staff culture throughout the year?**
It's not enough to introduce your staff to communication norms at the start of school and expect them to stick. If you don't continually shape staff culture, someone else will. There are some key concrete actions you can take on a day-to-day and month-by-month basis.

> *Keep an open face* – When inexperienced leaders face stress or conflict, they often "close" the face – they frown, lower the eyebrows, close the eyes slightly. Try looking in the mirror and keeping an open face during times of stress because stress and negativity can easily spread.
> *Listen first* – Leaders often inadvertently shake their heads or scrunch up their faces when they hear ideas with which they disagree. This damages staff culture and prevents staff from coming to you. Instead of planning your rebuttal, slow down and listen.
> *Use "we"instead of* I *or* you – A football coach would never say, "I prepared for the game…" Well, a school is also run by a team. Try to use "we" in all written and verbal communications.
> *Have a bias toward* Yes – When teachers come to you with new ideas or projects, never dismiss them offhand and try to have a bias toward saying yes.
> *Revisit the mission often* – When the school year gets tough it can help to bring the staff back to the reason they are all there – the mission of the school.
> *Use a month-to-month tracker* – In addition to consistent day-to-day actions that support staff culture, map out larger monthly events to build greater connections between staff. Whether these are handwritten notes for staff birthdays, staff talent shows, surprise celebrations, or staff breakfasts, it is best to map them out on a calendar or "culture tracker." This is more than simply having an occasional happy hour. This is a *systematic* and *consistent* approach to building staff culture.
> *Evaluate as always* – Just like the other levers in this book, even for a subjective area like staff culture, it is important to be able to evaluate it. There is a sample rubric on the DVD that breaks up staff culture into 11 components to be evaluated.

Staff Culture Rubric (excerpt)	
Leader Tone	• Principal is upbeat, motivational, and inspiring. • Principal is present throughout the school. • Principal celebrates real and meaningful progress and results, both large and small.
Staff Culture-Building Events	• School develops events and traditions. • Events and traditions are warm, thoughtful, frequent, and joyful. • Events and traditions (as well as new ideas) are staff driven as much as they are school driven.
Principal-Teacher Communication	• Principal embraces feedback from throughout organization. • Teachers and staff members feel their opinions count. • Principal knows how teachers are currently feeling about their work.

Overall, you must prioritize staff culture. The teacher in front of you is more important than taking that phone call or answering that email. Even on hectic days, perhaps especially on hectic days, connecting with your team will help everyone get through the stress.

Chapter 7 – Managing School Leadership Teams

On a Friday afternoon, the department chairs of each high school department at North Star High School are meeting to watch videos of each other giving feedback to teachers. This is how they improve their feedback to teachers. After each video, the other department chairs give feedback on how to make each other's coaching more effective. They are essentially giving each other "feedback on feedback."

Instructional leaders are rarely coached around what matters most: how to improve their ability to serve as instructional leaders
The premise of this book is that the highest-leverage actions a leader can take include a 15-minute weekly observation of each teacher and a regularly scheduled weekly meeting with each teacher to give feedback. This only works when principals distribute instructional leadership such that each instructional leader works with no more than 15 teachers. When this happens, how does the leader manage all of those instructional leaders to ensure that their work is effective? Building a strong leadership team requires a lot more than just choosing or even training strong leaders. Instead, your instructional leaders need to get continual "feedback on their feedback." In the same way that *teachers* are rarely observed at most schools, *leaders* are rarely coached about what matters most – how to improve the quality of their meetings with teachers. Leaders must make it a priority to build strong instructional leadership teams, and to do so, requires the four tasks below.

FOUR TASKS TO BUILD A SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAM
1. Identify Instructional Leaders – When choosing instructional leaders remember the goal is to get to the Golden Ratio of 15:1. Principals can not and *should not* serve as the only instructional leaders. Instead, involve reliable and receptive vice principals, deans, and other members of the administrative team to ensure that no one serves as an instructional leader for more than 15 teachers. Furthermore, strong teachers can serve as additional leaders by coaching one or two teachers. Assume this will take about 3 hours a week per teacher (the 15-minute observation, the 30-minute meeting, and about two hours of preparation). In exchange you can take away some of that veteran teacher's responsibilities or provide a stipend.

2. Train Your Team – Note that this type of instructional leadership will involve a shift in leadership for everyone so you will need to clarify the role of the instructional leaders at your school. Then you will need to train the instructional leaders in how to lead data, feedback, and planning meetings effectively. This is a challenging task. The parts of the book up until now have helped to clarify the *principles* behind instructional leadership. However, Part 4 in the book and the accompanying DVD is exclusively dedicated to providing all of the *materials, scripts, videos, and PowerPoint presentations* you will need to train your instructional leaders in these principles. (These are not included in the summary and for this reason, there are no more details here about this section.)

3. Give Feedback and Practice – Even if you do a perfect job training your leadership team, this training would not be complete without follow-up and feedback. Most school leadership teams have meetings, but these often don't go far enough to *improve the quality of instructional leadership*. Traditionally these meetings have focused on announcements, talking about teachers' development, or even discussing books and articles about leadership. However, and this is a quote from the author himself, "If all you do is read this book, I can pretty much guarantee it will have little impact. What changes practice is when we practice putting those ideas into action. Practicing reaches beyond leaders sharing their big takeaways from reading: it means role playing or acting on the spot." So if the school leader needs to *redefine* the leadership team meeting to get his or her leadership team to *practice*, what exactly does this look like? Below are some of the most effective actions (excerpted from p.231) every principal can take with his or her instructional leaders to improve the quality of their practice.

Highest Leverage Actions Principals Use to Improve the Practice of Their Instructional Leaders
To Improve Their Oversight of Data-Driven Instruction
• *Analyze data* from an interim assessment of a teacher the leader supports: plan out the analysis meeting the leader will have with that teacher.
• *Observe the assessment analysis meeting* (in person or watch a video of it).
• *Role-play* the analysis meeting.
To Improve Their Observation and Feedback of Teachers
• *Observe the teacher with the leader* and compare your sense of the most important action steps with what the leader has chosen.
• *Observe the feedback meeting* (in person or a watch video of it). How well is the leader implementing the six steps to effective feedback?
• *Role-play* the feedback meeting.
To Improve Their Assistance with Curricular Planning
• *Review a leader's feedback to a teacher's curriculum or lesson plan.* Is it the right feedback? Do teachers seem to be implementing the feedback?
• *Role-play* leading a planning meeting.
To Improve Their Role Leading Professional Development
• *Plan a PD session* together using the Living the Learning approach.
• *Observe the PD session* (in person or watch a video of it): Where can they improve their delivery of PD?

A video is a very helpful tool (as was used in the vignette at the beginning of this chapter) because the presence of the principal often changes the dynamic of a meeting. Principals can build in time (see the sample principal's schedule at the *end* of the summary) for a weekly check-in with the leadership team, either individually or as a group, to conduct some of the high-leverage actions outlined in the chart above. These actions will drastically improve the quality of instructional leadership at your school.

4. Evaluate Your Instructional Leaders

When you lead meetings with your instructional leaders in the ways suggested above, you will come to know the quality of their work deeply and it will not take long to evaluate it. You can use a rubric, based on the one in the accompanying DVD, that evaluates how often and how well your instructional leaders review lesson plans, observe teachers, give feedback, oversee data-driven instruction, and provide professional development (see the rubric for the full details).

PART III -- EXECUTION

Chapter 8 – Finding the Time

While there are many books on school leadership, what makes this book different are the specific details that help to show you *how* to implement the ideas in this book, such as this chapter which outlines three suggestions that can help leaders prioritize their time.

Keys to Finding the Time for Quality School Leadership

1. Lock in your weekly schedule – This will look different at each school, but to have the biggest impact on **student culture**, begin by blocking out time during breakfast, arrival, lunch, dismissal, and regular assemblies. Then lock in regular **group meetings** such PD, staff, and leadership team meetings. The third step is to lock in **teacher-leader meetings**: your weekly feedback sessions with the teachers you observe. Next, lock in your **observations** – these should occur *before* the meetings with each teacher. After that, build in time to check in on **staff culture** informally in the faculty room and to be present for the staff. Finally, build in time for **larger projects**. Below is a sample leader's schedule:

SAMPLE PRINCIPAL'S SCHEDULE					
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
6:00am					
:30	Greeting and breakfast	Greeting and breakfast		Greeting and breakfast	Greeting and breakfast
7:00am					
:30	Staff culture check	Morning assembly			Morning assembly
8:00am		Meet Wilson	Meet Bradley		Staff culture check
:30		Meet Vargas	Meet Frint		
9:00am	Observe Wilson, Vargas, Jenkins	Meet Jenkins			
:30			Observe Mitzia, Boykin, Devin		
10:00am					Observe Hoyt, Settles, Palma
:30					
11:00am		Staff culture check			
:30	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch		Lunch
12:00pm	Observe Henry, Bernales, Christian				Meet Henry
:30		Meet Worrell		Leadership team meeting	Meet Palma
1:00pm	Meeting with principal supervisor	Meet Christian	Meet Boykin		Meet Settles
:30		Meet Bernales	Meet Devin		Meet Hoyt
2:00pm		Observe Bradley, Frint, Worrell	Meet Mitzia		Large-project work time
:30					
3:00pm					
:30			Professional development session	Staff culture check	
4:00pm	Dismissal	Dismissal		Dismissal	Dismissal
:30					

2. Defend your time from distractions. Principals have one of the most interrupted jobs. If you don't defend your time, you may never enter a classroom. You may end your day feeling you have successfully answered 25 emails, responded to numerous phone calls, and even bravely put out several "fires." But every minute away from dealing with the seven levers introduced in this book is a minute away from the heart of your school's real business: teaching and learning.

So how do you defend your time? Take all of the tasks that are *not* about learning – technology, compliance, food service, transportation, safety inspections – and delegate. Either designate an operations leader or build an operations team by dividing up responsibilities and create a clear list of who is charge of which task. Once operations are taken care of, set clear expectations around questions and requests. While most questions only take 2 minutes, multiply this by 30 staff, 300 students, 600 parents… *Schedule times* when parents can ask you questions. You already have weekly check-ins built in for staff as well as time when you will be informally roaming to check in on staff culture. Set an expectation that teachers should hold non-emergency questions until these times. In addition, train office staff to use the list of who is in charge of what to steer nonessential questions away from the leader. Finally, don't respond to emails as they come in. This just pulls leaders in; choose a block of time to address all emails at once.

3. Manage your daily and monthly tasks. It is vital that school leaders have tools to manage their monthly, weekly, and daily tasks. Effective leaders have used a tool, called a monthly map, to keep track of the most important tasks they should be doing each month. Sample monthly maps for elementary, middle, and high school leaders are on the DVD if you need a good organizational tool.

Overall, the question of time is a crucial one. The book opened by stating that the outstanding leaders profiled in this book had very different personalities but they shared one important trait: they were smart about how they used their *time*.

Chapter 9 – The Superintendent's Guide: Managing and Developing Principals for Results

If the most effective *school* leaders need to focus on the seven key levers, then it follows that the most effective *superintendents* should also center their work around these seven levers as well. This means superintendents must put instructional leadership at the core of their work and not be distracted by all of the non-instructional tasks that often distract them. Instead they will find they can be most successful by honing in on the following three tasks:

1. Train principals in the core levers. All of the materials, scripts, videos, and PowerPoint presentations superintendents need to train instructional leaders in the core levers are in Part 4 and the DVD. These materials are far too detailed to include in a summary.

2. Coach principals in the core levers. School leadership is challenging and districts are trying to find ways to support and manage principals more effectively. Unfortunately some superintendents' approaches haven't been so effective. Here are three common errors:

> **Error 1: Walkthoughs Without Purpose** – Sometimes superintendents conduct walkthroughs, often narrated by a principal. Even if they have a checklist or a rubric and they observe for rigor, they have no way of knowing if the students have actually learned the material without a link to data-driven instruction. Also, walkthroughs don't show progress. For example, there is no way to know if the principal has been successful in developing the novice teachers over time.
> **Error 2: School Reviews** – Some superintendents conduct a two- or three-day review in which principals compile a great deal of paperwork to show they are in compliance. However, single snapshot only provides the principal with two days of coaching over an entire year. Imagine a tennis player receiving so little coaching and then competing in the U.S. Open!
> **Error 3: Leading from Afar** – Some superintendents rely on data from school leaders rather than visiting schools and classrooms. Without these visits, the superintendent cannot compare his or her judgment with that of the school leader.

So, how should superintendents be coaching and managing principals? In much the same way as principals are coaching and managing the members of their instructional leadership team: by giving principals time for repeated practice and face-to-face feedback on the parts of their job that matter most. What does this look like? It includes items like the following:

• *Superintendent observes teachers with the leader.* Do the key action steps written in the observation tracker match the areas of difficulty the superintendent sees in the classroom?
• *Observe video of the principal's feedback meeting.* How well does the principal implement the six steps to effective feedback?
• *Observe PD.* What is the quality of the PD? How does the principal make sure teachers implement what they learn during the PD?
• *Review a leader's curriculum and lesson plan feedback.* Is it the right feedback? Do teachers seem to be implementing the feedback?

To truly support principals in this way will require a great deal of time. This means that superintendents need to rewrite their schedules and block out about 50 percent of it to work directly with principals. What percentage of your current work week is devoted to working directly with principals? If this will require a drastic reworking of your schedule, remember that if your goal is to support principals to lead excellent schools, then this is the crucial first step. Based on the size of your district, plan on the following:

> • A district with <u>7 principals</u> per supervisor: one on-site meeting or school visit <u>per week</u>
> • A district with <u>15 principals</u> per supervisor: one on-site meeting or school visit <u>every other week</u>
> • A district with <u>30 principals</u> per supervisor: one on-site meeting or school visit <u>every month</u>

3. Monitor progress in the core levers. If superintendents want to assess the quality of their principals, it is best to focus on how well they are implementing the seven levers. While this may seem like a monstrous task, especially if you are a superintendent in a large district, all but one of the levers has a rubric (on the DVD) that you can use (or tweak). Below is a list of the seven core levers and the tools you can use to assess how well your principals are implementing them.

Core Lever	The Key Measures of its Implementation
1. Data-Driven Instruction	**Interim assessment results** *and* **DDI implementation rubric score**
2. Observation and Feedback	**Observation tracker**: Average # of observations per teacher
	Observation tracker: % of action steps that are bite-sized, measurable, and actionable
3. Planning	**Curriculum plan rubric**: % of plans that are proficient
	Lesson plan rubric: % of lesson plans in a spot check that are proficient
4. Professional Development	**PD rubric:** Proficiency when delivering PD
5. Student Culture	**Student culture rubric:** % of categories proficient on a school culture walkthrough
6. Staff Culture	**Staff culture rubric:** % of categories that are proficient
7. Leadership Team	**Instructional leadership (IL) rubric score**

While this may seem like a lot of information for a superintendent to collect, if you put it all into one chart or "dashboard," then it won't seem so overwhelming. Having all of the information in one comprehensive dashboard will allow superintendents to not only see strengths and weaknesses in each individual school, but it will also bring district patterns to light. This allows superintendents to differentiate leadership PD based on the needs of individual leaders. Below is an excerpt of what this dashboard might look like. No shading shows the principal is meeting the target, light shading is just below the target, and dark shading shows where the superintendent should focus his or her efforts to support the principal.

Measure	Category	TARGET	Elem School 1	Elem School 2	MS 1	High School
Data-driven Instruction	Literacy Interim Assessments +/- last year	0	-4	-9	15	-2
	Math Interim Assessments +/- last year	0	3	5	7	-1
	Science Interim Assessments +/- last year	0	5	3	8	
	History Interim Assessments +/- last year	0	-7	-5	-4	
	Implementation Rubric	90%	94%	89%	81%	88%
Observation and feedback	Average # observations per teacher	11	21	5	3	19
	% of feedback measurable, actionable	90%	30%	97%	55%	70%
PD	PD delivery proficient	3	3.3	3.7	3.1	-
Planning	Curriculum plans proficient	90%	83%	90%	67%	100%
Etc.						

Throughout the book, the exceptional leaders have been able to succeed because they created the *systems* necessary to allow them to employ the *seven strategies* that maximize the *time* they spend on *student learning*. They spend their time wisely focusing on the right things. The hope is that the materials and detailed nature of this book will allow you to do the same as well.