

Effective School Leadership for Today's Urban Schools

Principal Baruti Kafele

He who cannot dance will say,
“The drum is bad.”

Nelson Mandela's 8 Lessons of Leadership

(Source - Time Magazine - July 21, 2008 Edition - Richard Stengel, Writer)

1. Courage is not the absence of fear - it's inspiring others to move beyond it.
2. Lead from the front - but don't leave your base behind.
3. Lead from the back - and let others believe they are in front.
4. Know your enemy - and learn about his favorite sport.
5. Keep your friends close - and your rivals closer.
6. Appearances matter - and remember to smile.
7. Nothing is in black or white.
8. Quitting is leading too.

As it relates to your leadership:

- Who are you?
- What are you about?
- What is your most recent evidence?
- What will you accomplish today?
- How will you make it happen?



As it relates to your staff's perception of your leadership:

- Are you the school *instructional* leader?
- Are you the school *informational* leader?
- Are you the school *inspirational* leader?
- Are you the school *empowerment* leader?



Closing the “Other Gaps”

- The “**Attitude Gap**”
Do I believe in them?
- The “**Relationship Gap**”
Do I know them?
- The “**Compassion Gap**”
Do I care about them?
- The “**Relevance Gap**”
Do I realize who they are?
- The “**Empowerment Gap**”
Do I teach them how to fly?



10 Critical Questions Toward Effective Principal Leadership

1. Why do I lead and what drives my decision-making?
2. Who are we as a school and where are we going?
3. Is my school climate and culture conducive to high academic performance?
4. Are the relationships in my school conducive to high academic performance?
5. Does my staff perceive me as their instructional leader?
6. Is failure an option in my school?
7. How are we going to get to our destination?
8. Am I growing as the school instructional leader?
9. How am I preparing my staff for the 21st Century child?
10. Have I made parental & community engagement a school priority?

Why do I lead and what drives my decision-making? (The Attitude of the Leadership)



Why do I lead and what drives my decision-making? (The Attitude of the Leadership)

- Do I lead with a definite purpose which drives everything I say and everything I do?
- Do I aim to be intentional about what I do as a leader?
- Do I treat my leadership not as a job, profession or career, but as a mission?
- Do I have a vision of what I expect my students to achieve?
- Do I see myself as the number one determinant of the success or failure of my students?

Who are we as a school and where are we going? (School Identity and Direction)



Who are we as a school and where are we going? (School Identity and Direction)

- Do I engage my staff in the development of our school identity?
- Do I ensure that my students and staff can articulate our school motto, mission, vision and objectives?
- Do I regularly communicate our school motto, mission, vision and objectives to my students and staff?
- Do I have high standards and expectations for my students and staff and *believe* that they will reach them?
- Do I regularly reinforce what is expected and required of my students both academically and behaviorally as a result of enrollment in my school?

Is my school climate and culture conducive to high academic performance? (School Climate and Culture)



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(School Climate and Culture)

- Do I greet my students individually as they are arriving to school in the morning?
- Do I set the tone for my school at the start of each day through positive, motivating and uplifting morning announcements?
- Do I consistently strive to keep my staff and students motivated and excited about learning?
- Do I ensure that my overall school environment is conducive to learning?
- Do I ensure that each of my classroom learning environments are conducive to learning?

Is my school climate and culture conducive to high academic performance?
(The Principal in Action)

- First day of school "family" meeting
- Weekly, monthly, quarterly school-wide "family" meetings
- Greeting students as they arrive to school in the morning
- Student morning announcements
- Principals morning message
- High visibility in halls and cafeteria
- Classroom visits
- Homework expectations
- "Nip it in the Bud" announcements
- End of the day announcements
- Student dismissal
- Young Men's / Young Women's Empowerment Program
- Clubs and activities

Is my school climate and culture conducive to high academic performance?
(My Outside Grounds)

- Well maintained
- Grounds clean
- No graffiti
- No missing or broken letters on sign
- Marquee current

Is my school climate and culture conducive to high academic performance?
(My Front Lobby)

- Clean environment
- Floors shining
- Windows spotless
- Walls painted
- Receptionist / security who welcome and respect visitors
- Minimal noise and minimal traffic
- The mission and vision of the principal are evident!

Is my school climate and culture conducive to high academic performance?
(My Hallways)

- Painted walls and stairwells
- Motivational quotes posted
- Posters of historical images that reflect the student population
- Motto, mission, vision and objectives posted
- Academic excellence criteria posted
- Hallway expectations of students posted
- Dress code posted
- Clean halls and stairwells
- Shining floors
- Student work samples posted
- Photos of students posted
- The mission and vision of the principal are evident!

Is my school climate and culture conducive to high academic performance?
(My Classrooms)

- Walls painted
- Clean floors
- Motto, mission, vision and objectives posted
- Academic excellence criteria posted
- Student goals (and strategies) posted
- Classroom expectations of students posted
- Homework criteria posted
- Dress code posted
- Student work samples posted
- Subject-specific material posted (print rich)
- Motivational quotes posted
- Posters of historical images that reflect the students posted
- The mission and vision of the teacher are evident!

Are the relationships in my school conducive to high academic performance?
(Building Collegial Relationships)



Are the relationships in my school conducive to high academic performance?
(Building Collegial Relationships)

- Do I maintain a collegial relationship with my staff as it relates to improvement in instruction?
- Do I ensure that my new teachers are paired with competent veteran teachers?
- Do I encourage my veteran teachers to observe the instruction of my new teachers and vice versa?
- Do I participate in staff team meetings and provide input and leadership where warranted?
- Do I demonstrate an appreciation and respect for my staff?

Does my staff perceive me as their instructional leader?
(Instructional Leadership)



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(Instructional Leadership)

- Do I have a philosophy, beliefs, opinions and ideas about how children learn based upon my own research, reading and experiences?
- Do I understand that my main priority is student achievement and the continued improvement of instruction?
- Do I spend the majority of my time in classrooms *everyday* observing instruction and learning?
- Do I ensure that my staff utilizes a variety of instructional strategies in an effort to address the different learning styles, ability levels and needs of my students in student-centered, culturally responsive learning environments?
- Do I provide immediate feedback to my staff after observing their instruction via utilization of a clinical model of supervision?

Is failure an option in my school?
(Accountability and Responsibility)



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(Accountability and Responsibility)

- Do I hold my teachers accountable for ensuring that all of my students strive to achieve academic excellence, which includes meeting and/or exceeding district, state and federally-mandated benchmarks?
- Do I refuse to accept failure, make excuses for failure or allow failure to occur in my school?
- Do I accept responsibility and accountability for student success and failure?
- Do I model what I expect of my students and staff?
- Do I conduct daily self-reflections and self assessments of my leadership?

**How are we going to get to our destination?
(Planning, Organization and Time Management)**



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(Planning, Organization and Time Management)**

- Do I plan each day thoroughly while adhering to my own written plan of action for student success?
- Do I ensure that I am well organized relative to my daily routine of observing instruction and learning?
- Do I strive to empower my staff through involving them in school-level planning and decision-making?
- Do I utilize data to drive instructional decision-making?
- Do I ensure that I am well versed in my district curriculum, state content standards and state assessment specifications, and ensure full infusion into lesson plan development?

**Am I growing as the school instructional leader?
(Professional Development for the Leader)**



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(Professional Development for the Leader)**

- Do I read professional development literature on the latest research in instructional leadership?
- Do I attend professional development conferences and workshops addressing instructional leadership?
- Do I belong to professional associations?
- Do I confer with colleagues and other educational leaders toward my own professional growth and development as an instructional leader?
- Do I and members of my staff visit schools with successful instructional programs?

**How am I preparing my staff
for the 21st Century child?
(Professional Development for Staff)**



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for the 21st Century child?
(Professional Development for Staff)**

- Do I provide ongoing professional development for my staff?
- Do I utilize staff meeting time for staff professional development?
- Do I engage all staff during professional development staff meetings?
- Do I regularly educate my staff through providing professional literature?
- Do I engage my staff in book talks on topics pertaining to improvement in instruction?

Have I made parental and community engagement a school priority?
(Parental and Community Engagement)



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(Parental and Community Engagement)

- Do I make parental and community engagement a *priority* in my practice as a school leader?
- Do I ensure that parents and community members feel welcome whenever they visit my school?
- Do I utilize parents and community members in the programs and activities that we have at my school?
- Do I aim to be accessible to parents and community members?
- Do I aim to be receptive to input and ideas from parents and community members?

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