



Overview



13 Parameters

A Literacy Leadership Toolkit



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13 Parameters

A Literacy Leadership Toolkit

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Overview



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by Michael Fullan

Although it is easy to espouse literacy for all, it is much harder to mobilize an educational system to strive for quality implementation and continuous improvement. The good news is that we know much about what it takes to improve large systems; the bad news is that such mobilization is difficult, requiring a strong, ever-developing knowledge base and persistent effort to put the knowledge into action.

13 Parameters: A Literacy Leadership Toolkit combines thorough knowledge and strategies and resources for implementation better than any resource I know of. The concepts and ideas contained within it have been refined in the classrooms of a large school system. At the same time, its originators have drawn on and contributed to the worldwide field of literacy education reform. This has been the work of the York Region District School Board—a highly diverse, urban district just outside Toronto, Ontario—and its 10 000 teachers and administrators.

While the parameters were being implemented inside the district's schools, a number of school leaders visited countries, including New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States in order to add to their knowledge base. In turn, educators from these and other countries came to York Region to see the district's precise approach to assessment and instruction through the lens of literacy. The 13 Parameters have been the content for highly successful systemwide reform in York Region.

Gains in student performance and teacher satisfaction are powerful. These gains are documented in the article, "Accomplishing Districtwide Reform" (Sharratt and Fullan, 2006), included in this Toolkit. At its core, the Toolkit integrates curriculum, instruction, and assessment to provide a pedagogical synergy in each and every elementary and secondary classroom in any district. Above all, the model combines knowledge of pedagogy and knowledge of change.

This model resonates with what is happening in the international field of literacy. Let us consider it in another context. In *Breakthrough* (2006), Peter Hill, Carmel Crévola, and I explore the notion of moral purpose—the pervasive commitment to raising the bar and closing the gap for all students. In that text, we also outline the Triple P model—Personalization, Precision, and Professional learning. Personalization is getting at the individual learning needs of each child as the child develops. Precision involves relating to the needs with just the right instructional response to engage the student in the learning required to move forward. Professional

learning—and this is where it gets hard—requires *each and every teacher* to learn how to do this as an instructional classroom teacher and as part of teams within and across schools.

In addition to moral purpose and the Triple P model, the *entire system* must work in concert to achieve what we call “tri-level reform.” Such reform combines school and community as one level, although large systems can be subdivided further; districts or regions as the middle level; and government or the state as the third level. Within the model, teachers learn from one another, and schools and districts learn from one another. The first arrangement is sometimes described as a professional learning community; the second, as lateral capacity building. There is also greater two-way rapport and learning across the levels—school and district; district and government; parents and communities vis-à-vis schools, districts, and government.

Coherence and alignment across the three levels are certainly needed, but the dynamism of tri-level reform is best described as “permeable connectivity.” In such a system, there are lots of two-way streets in which mutual knowledge, influence, and commitment flow.

This notion is not just theoretical; it is based on developing the theories and practices on the ground. By using this knowledge, England improved literacy and numeracy by an average of 17 percentage points across its 20 000 schools in less than 10 years; Ontario, by 10 percentage points in four years; and York Region, by more than 10 percentage points in its 181 schools, including improved literacy in high schools, as measured by the performance of Grade 10 students.

Five aspects make this Toolkit a powerful resource.

1. Leadership at all levels
2. Planning
3. The 13 Parameters
4. Video resources
5. Organizers, activities, and tools for facilitators

But the work in improving literacy achievement is far from done; hence, the timeliness and value of *13 Parameters: A Literacy Leadership Toolkit*.

First, the model requires developing and mobilizing literacy leaders at all levels: literacy coaches within schools; principals and assistant principals in new roles as instructional leaders; district staff, including superintendents who, for the first time, get deeply into issues of instruction and assessment, not just curriculum; ministry of education staff; and university personnel involved in teacher education. The model recognizes the need for continuous professional development within and across schools and districts.

Second, the Toolkit has the right understanding of planning. Improving literacy is not about big strategic plans; it is about balancing and integrating plans and action—getting the right focus, defining the plan in action-based terms, carefully facilitating the learning sessions, and constantly monitoring, reviewing, and refining the cycle. The Toolkit helps users do this.

Third, there are the 13 Parameters: solid, comprehensive, specific, essential, and dynamically intertwined. They were created from research conducted in York Region District School Board, and then used by teachers, principals, community members, district staff, university facilitators, and ministry personnel working together. I have participated in and witnessed their evolution.

The parameters reflect a characteristic of all effective organizations: Learning is the work. Learning is not about external courses and professional development sessions; rather, it is about getting it right day after day by purposeful learning on the job. Whether we examine school systems, businesses, or hospitals, the best organizations pursue their work with precision and specificity. They also combine precision with creativity; that is, they consistently implement what they know works at the same time as they search for even better ways. The 13 Parameters are specificity—this is what makes them so valuable. They can be clearly understood and implemented. They really work.

Fourth, the parameters are backed up by video vignettes that show them in action. One hallmark of an effective organization is that leaders at all levels of the system not only practise what they advocate, but are articulate about what they are doing, why they are doing it, what results they are getting, and what they need to do to get even better. The video vignettes address all of this. Teachers, administrative leaders, and students talk about and demonstrate each of the parameters in action. Together, the video clips and text make a powerful combination that focuses on and enables learners to get into the issues of literacy reform with clarity and confidence.

Fifth, the *Facilitator's Resource* within the Toolkit contains numerous resources for putting the ideas into practice. Various feedback forms can be used to strengthen action and increase commitment to move forward. There are organizers, both advance frameworks for overseeing the process and planning charts for session-by-session activities. There is also a set of generic PowerPoint slides. Finally, the Literacy Leadership School Assessment Tool (Sharratt, 2006) allows users to assess where they are on implementing each of the 13 Parameters.

However, practical resources, including tools and instruments, are only as good as the mindset governing their use. The *Facilitator's Resource* is unequivocal and explicit about the theoretical bases of literacy leadership. These ideas, reinforced by articles in the accompanying *Research Resource Book*, are embedded in it. What makes the *Facilitator's Resource* especially powerful is its focus on leaders at all levels—teacher-leaders such as literacy coaches, principals, district staff, university instructors, and system-level leaders. Everyone has a role to play and is supported in that role. Leaders share the pressure of moral purpose, good ideas, a sense of urgency, and the belief that there is no excuse for failing to take purposeful action.

As improving literacy at a deep level becomes the core priority around the world, the Toolkit meets the need for a timely and effective resource. *13 Parameters: A Literacy Leadership Toolkit* reflects the quality work that is occurring in our schools at the same time that it propels this work forward for all.

If greater student literacy achievement is your goal, proceed with this comprehensive Toolkit as your guide.

Michael Fullan

Overview of the 13 Parameters: A Literacy Leadership Toolkit

13 Parameters: A Literacy Leadership Toolkit provides a comprehensive approach to collaborative professional learning with a focus on literacy. The Toolkit is designed to facilitate the implementation of the 13 Parameters that contribute to increased student achievement. These parameters, all well established through research, form the backbone of the Toolkit:

13 Parameters for Effective Literacy Teaching and Learning

Parameter 1: Shared Beliefs and Understandings Among All Staff

Parameter 2: Designated Staff Member for Literacy

Parameter 3: Daily, Sustained, Focused Literacy Instruction

Parameter 4: Principal as Literacy Leader

Parameter 5: Early and Ongoing Intervention

Parameter 6: A Case Management Approach to Monitoring Student Progress

Parameter 7: Job-Embedded Professional Learning in Literacy

Parameter 8: In-School Grade or Subject Team Meetings

Parameter 9: Shared Literacy Resources in a Designated Area of the School

Parameter 10: Commitment of School Budget to Acquiring Literacy Resources

Parameter 11: Staff Commitment to Literacy Learning and Professional Development

Parameter 12: Parental Involvement in Supporting Literacy Development

Parameter 13: Appropriate Literacy Instruction in All Areas of the Curriculum

The Toolkit provides all the tools needed to facilitate literacy leadership sessions based on the parameters. One component is this Overview; five other components are detailed on the pages that follow.

- The DVD
- *Facilitator's Resource*
- Cards: 13 Parameters
- Card: Who Are Your Adult Learners?
- *Research Resource Book*

The DVD

The heart of this Toolkit is the video footage provided on the DVD. Each of the video clips explores one of the 13 Parameters key to successful literacy leadership. The video clips capture the day-to-day work of literacy leaders and feature the students, teachers, and administrators who have experienced the parameters at work. Beyond seeing and hearing what literacy teaching and learning looks and sounds like, session participants will hear literacy leaders reflect openly about their experiences in terms of student and professional learning.

The Toolkit DVD also includes all planning, activity, feedback, and assessment-tool line masters in printable electronic format, reproducible pages from articles contained in the *Research Resource Book*, as well as PowerPoint slides that facilitators can use during learning sessions.

Facilitator's Resource

This resource features parameter overview pages, with facilitator notes and suggestions, activities, feedback forms, assessment tools, all planning and activity line masters, and PowerPoint slides.

Each parameter overview is structured in the following way:

Overview
Explains the parameter, outlining its key components

What's on the Video?
Outlines the real-life examples learners will see in the video clip to help build their understanding of the parameter

Key Understandings
Summarizes the key understandings and provides the facilitator with observations learners will likely make while viewing the video clip

Viewing Activities
Provides viewing activities that encourage learners to access prior knowledge, and then observe and reflect upon key points made in the video clip

Guiding Questions
Features two questions that the facilitator can pose to groups to encourage full exploration of the parameter; includes possible responses

Parameter 1: Shared Beliefs and Understandings Among All Staff

Understanding the Parameter

Overview
Parameter 1 outlines a set of beliefs and understandings that provide a foundation for literacy work. First introduced by Peter Hill and Carmel Creola in 1995, this set of beliefs and understandings is pivotal in guiding thinking about the teaching and learning of literacy; these beliefs and understandings will also emerge over time from focused interactions within schools and across districts.

We move, through our literacy work, toward a shared understanding of these core beliefs:

1. All students can achieve high standards given the right time and support.
2. All teachers can teach to high standards given the right assistance.
3. High expectations and early intervention are essential.
4. Teachers need to be able to articulate what they do and why they teach the way they do.
(Hill and Creola 1995)

Literacy leaders in all schools not only share these beliefs, but also "walk the talk" by modeling them.

What's on the Video?
The video captures literacy leaders talking about how these four beliefs became embedded in practice in their schools. The talk reveals that within this parameter, effective change involves focused interactions. Over time, these beliefs and understandings develop and become a shared experience, embedded in the literacy teaching and learning community.

Before Viewing

- Ask participants to read the information about the parameter on the Parameter Information sheet (2-3 minutes).
- Encourage participants to underline key points and write notes in the margin.
- Ask participants to turn to an elbow partner and discuss what they understand about the parameter (3-5 minutes).

During Viewing

- Ask participants to use the Key Understandings chart on the Parameter Information sheet to note how the parameter is evident and effectively implemented in the video clip.

Key Understandings

Participants may note the following observations while viewing the video clip:

This set of beliefs and understandings is pivotal in guiding thinking about the teaching and learning of literacy.

- "I really believe now that all children can read." A teacher's experience changes her belief about the teaching and learning of literacy. How belief now guides her teaching.
- A team of math teachers believes students below grade level can achieve at a higher standard. They design a research project to explore how to make it happen.
- A principal thinks about what resources teachers will need to implement guided reading with students.
- A student notes teachers' increasing comfort with technology in the classroom.
- A principal states that the school's goal is to see every student achieve.
- Teachers explain their approaches to meeting student needs. Balanced literacy instruction that responds to data and reflective practice.

Exploration of this parameter provides a focus for professional dialogue and further development of shared beliefs.

- A math action research team shares effective practice and results with colleagues.
- The team's pride in students' achievement in math literacy underscores belief that all students can learn.
- A teacher can confidently articulate her goals to her students.
- Students understand teacher's goal to teach them to write good summaries.
- A literacy teacher leads a session on effective teacher practice.
- At a community meeting, the principal states that the school aims to provide support for all students.

Exploring the Parameter

Pose one of the following Guiding Questions for participants to discuss in their table groups (5-10 minutes). Ask groups to summarize their discussion and designate one member to share a key point with the larger group.

Guiding Questions

1. How is a common set of beliefs and understandings fostered in a district or in a school?
 - District and school leaders model the message and provide the following support:
 - time for professional dialogue focused on what practitioners believe and understand to be true about the teaching and learning of literacy
 - opportunities for professional development that encourage new practices that, in turn, affect beliefs
 - resources that support a literacy teaching focus
2. If educators shared these four beliefs and understandings, how would that have an impact on student achievement?
 - These common beliefs and understandings would provide:
 - a foundation for focused work with students
 - a renewed emphasis on student success
 - a renewed emphasis on teacher success
 - With the commitment to high expectations and early intervention, teachers would use common assessments to identify student need and then address those needs with targeted instruction.

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Parameter 1: Shared Beliefs and Understandings Among All Staff | 25

Facilitator Notes

Addresses issues and questions that specific learner groups will likely raise as they explore the parameter

Planning Next Steps

Details suggestions for moving theory into practice, although the facilitator may also devise other ways to encourage learners to plan next steps: The goal is to guide participants on how to take what they have learned and understand of the parameter and apply it in their work settings.

Facilitator Notes
Changes in beliefs and understandings are difficult to achieve because they often challenge the fundamental values that practitioners hold about the purposes of education. Beliefs and understandings often operate at a tacit, unspoken level. To make them explicit requires the examination of teaching skills and approaches, the use of new materials, and ongoing reflection and discussion with colleagues.

The following question is often raised during the exploration of Parameter 1: "What comes first—the beliefs or the understandings?" This "chicken and egg" issue highlights the fact that some people need to experience results to believe that an approach works, while others may change their practice based on confidence in a new belief. Facilitators can encourage the group to recognize that a common language of literacy teaching and learning will allow professional dialogue to more readily affect beliefs, understandings, and practice and, therefore, have a positive impact on student achievement.

District leaders are instrumental in supporting the development of shared beliefs and understandings; they can articulate them and demonstrate them as they interact with schools and teachers. Discussions with district leaders should lead to an understanding that successful professional learning focuses on understanding both literacy teaching and learning and the process of change.

University educators can encourage pre-service teachers to examine and develop their beliefs and understandings in relation to those outlined in Parameter 1. For new teachers, this exercise:

- provides a foundation on which instructional decisions can be based;
- creates a sense of belonging within the profession, district, and school; and
- provides a focus for asking questions and establishing professional relationships.

Graduate and continuing education students, especially those who are literacy teachers, may need to examine and collaboratively construct strategies to support the development of shared beliefs and understandings.

Applying the Parameter

Consider the group's focus at this stage and then select an activity.

- **Awareness:** Is the group working toward developing an understanding of the parameter? See Activities 1 to 6.
- **Analysis:** Are group members critically analyzing the concepts or strategies presented in the parameter and assessing to what extent they agree with them? See Activities 1 to 7.
- **Planning:** Is the group ready to begin thinking about how to implement the parameter in its school or district? See Activities 1, 2, and 7.

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Planning Next Steps

The facilitator's role is now to guide participants in determining what they as individuals or as a group will do to move the theory of this parameter into practice in their work setting. Specific to Parameter 1, next steps may include the following:

- *building awareness of this parameter by encouraging personal connection to it:* Participants could consider the parameter as they work and share reflections about it at the next session; or, they could bring in related examples, such as student work or professional resources.
- *examining the notion that all students can achieve high standards and that all teachers can teach to high standards:* Focused discussion about readings, such as those listed in the Making Connections chart, can support this examination.
- *adopting the beliefs and understandings and developing a plan to gather student data:* The data would become the base for targeted instruction to improve student achievement.

It is important to record and monitor the progress of the group's plans for implementing the parameter.

Making Connections

Related Parameters	Themes	Recommended Readings
All	System Reform Change Knowledge and Expertise Instruction and Assessment	R1: Accomplishing Districtwide Reform R2: New Lessons for Districtwide Reform R3: The Role of Standards in Educational Reform for the 21st Century R12: Re-imagining the Literacy Lives of Students R14: Becoming an Engaged Reader R21: Transformational Leadership for Challenging Schools

Parameter 1: Shared Beliefs and Understandings Among All Staff | 27

Applying the Parameter

Identifies activities designed to move learners toward applying their understanding of the parameter. Suggested activities support learner groups at different stages of implementing the parameter.

Making Connections

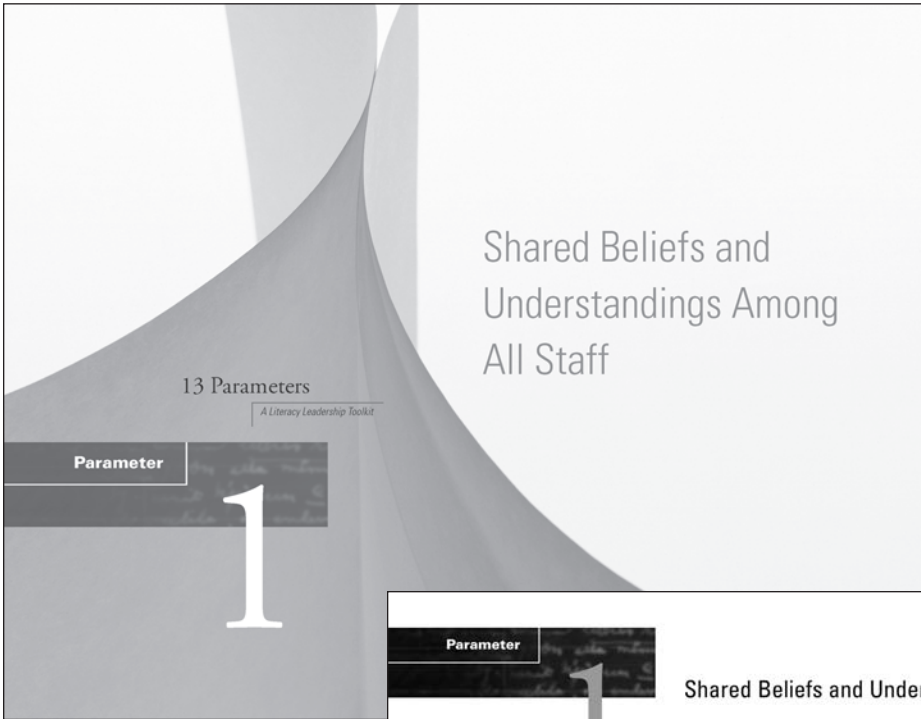
Lists related parameters and themes and recommended readings from the *Research Resource Book*. The facilitator can consider the options and make choices that will combine to support group learning goals.

Whether working with school staff, district leaders, or university students in teacher education or graduate programs, tools within the *Facilitator's Resource* help facilitators match Literacy Leadership Toolkit components to adult learners' needs. The resource takes facilitators through the steps involved in planning and delivering adult learning sessions. Facilitators can select videos, activities, and readings that will help participants to understand, explore, and apply the parameters that support literacy leadership.

This resource is designed to support facilitators in determining the starting point for group learning. Facilitators can assess the group's point on a continuum from building awareness of a parameter and its related concepts to full implementation of the parameter. Once determined, the starting point will guide the choices made from a flexible set of options as facilitators plan professional learning sessions.

Cards: The 13 Parameters

There are double-sided laminated cards, one for each of the 13 Parameters. On one side of a card is the parameter title; on the other side is a detailed overview of the parameter. These easy-to-read cards can be used as a quick reference by facilitators or leadership teams when planning learning sessions. In learning sessions, the cards can be used by individuals, partners, or small groups when they need a quick reference to the details of a parameter to support an activity.



Parameter

1

Shared Beliefs and Understandings Among All Staff

Parameter 1 outlines a set of beliefs and understandings that provide a foundation for literacy work. First introduced by Peter Hill and Carmel Crévola in 1999, this set of beliefs and understandings is pivotal in guiding thinking about the teaching and learning of literacy; these beliefs and understandings will also emerge over time from focused interactions within schools and across districts.

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3. High expectations and early intervention are essential.
4. Teachers need to be able to articulate what they do and why they teach the way they do.

(Hill and Crévola 1999)

Literacy leaders in all schools not only share these beliefs, but also “walk the talk” by modelling them. ■

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Card: Who Are Your Adult Learners?

This laminated card is a planning tool that provides the facilitator with guidelines for identifying and understanding the adult learner group. The chart identifies three main groups of literacy learners: district leaders, school leaders, and university students in teacher training or graduate programs. A facilitator considers the chart information that highlights each group's responsibilities, questions, and goals as educators. The *Facilitator's Resource* then provides further direction for planning professional learning sessions. There, Facilitator Notes address the questions and issues that will likely be raised by the different groups while they explore each parameter.

Research Resource Book

The foundational article, and the lead article in this resource, “Accomplishing Districtwide Reform” (Sharratt and Fullan, 2006), clearly establishes the 13 areas that are equally important to consider when focusing on increased student achievement. The 20 articles that follow explore six themes that have emerged from field research into the teaching and learning of literacy and the process of managing change. (These themes are outlined in the Backgrounder, which is included in this Overview.) Each reading also relates to at least one of the 13 Parameters. The readings, all by leading educators, can be used to extend understanding of the concepts presented in the videos and to provide the foundation for a deeper understanding of literacy leadership and the management of change.

Introductory pages for each reading include an article abstract and two guiding questions that can be used to initiate discussion on article concepts. Activities, with step-by-step instructions, are also included, as are line masters of related graphic organizers so that learners can record the thinking and ideas that come out of the activities.

At a Glance pages include information about the readings to facilitate planning for use in learning sessions.

Summary of key ideas and main concepts presented in the article

Guiding Questions to initiate discussion of article concepts.

- Question 1 focuses on understanding the concepts presented in the article.
- Question 2 focuses on considering how the concepts can be applied in the adult learners' work contexts.

Recommendations for connecting this reading to themes and parameters.

Reading 1, page 53

Accomplishing Districtwide Reform

LYN SHARRATT AND MICHAEL FULLAN

In Brief

The current literature is filled with examples of districts that have made thoughtful and significant system changes in order to facilitate large-scale instructional improvement, yet have not obtained the improvement in practice and student results they expected. This article highlights the important lessons about districtwide reform that have emerged in York Region District School Board in the early stages of their literacy reform. A large, multicultural district in Ontario, York Region has a diverse socio-cultural and linguistic population. The widespread support for the district Literacy Collaborative strategy, and the strong results from a subset of schools that implemented the literacy components consistently, suggest that effective change involves precision and perseverance. The results so far suggest that a tipping point to achieving significant system change may be near. The 13 Parameters for effective literacy teaching and learning—the foundation of this Toolkit—emerged from the York Region Literacy Collaborative strategy.

Guiding Questions

1. What major lessons or insights emerge from the study of this district's literacy reform efforts?
2. Which of these lessons or insights are important in your own work context? Why?

Making Connections

Themes	Parameters
System Reform	Parameter 1: Shared Beliefs and Understandings Among All Staff
Change Knowledge and Expertise	Parameter 11: Staff Commitment to Literacy Learning and Professional Development
Professional Learning	
Shared Leadership	

14 | 13 Parameters: A Literacy Leadership Toolkit, Research Resource Book

In the first column of the chart, articles are grouped by the main theme that each addresses. The next set of columns shows which parameters each reading supports. Although articles are organized by main theme, most articles link to more than one theme; the last section of the chart indicates these links.

Parameters									
Articles	P1 Shared Beliefs	P2 Literacy Teacher	P3 Daily Literacy Instruction	P4 Principal as Literacy Leader	P5 Intervention	P6 Case Management	P7 Job-Embedded PL	P8 Team Meetings	
System Reform									
<i>R1: Accomplishing Districtwide Reform</i>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
<i>R2: New Lessons for Districtwide Reform</i>	•			•					
<i>R3: Great Expectations: The Transformation of Lake Wilcox Public School</i>				•		•	•		
<i>R4: Miracles in Progress: System Change and Coherence</i>									
<i>R5: The Role of Standards in Educational Reform for the 21st Century</i>	•		•		•	•			
Change Knowledge and Expertise									
<i>R6: Dynamic Duo</i>		•		•					
<i>R7: Creating a Culture of Change</i>		•		•			•	•	
<i>R8: Change Knowledge</i>		•		•	•		•	•	
Instruction and Assessment									
<i>R9: Getting Acquainted with the Essential Nine</i>							•		
<i>R10: Learning-Focused Classrooms: Patterns of Practice</i>				•		•	•		
<i>R11: Assessment for Learning: Why, What, and How?</i>			•			•		•	
<i>R12: Re-visioning the Literacy Lives of Students</i>	•		•						
<i>R13: What I've Learned About Effective Reading Instruction</i>			•						
<i>R14: Becoming an Engaged Reader</i>	•		•						
Professional Learning									
<i>R15: Building Professional Community in Schools</i>		•		•		•	•	•	
<i>R16: On-the-Job Learning</i>		•		•			•	•	
<i>R17: Use These 6 Keys to Open Doors to Literacy</i>			•				•		
Planning									
<i>R18: Understanding and Practising Continuous Improvement in Education Quality</i>				•				•	
<i>R19: Transformational Leadership for Challenging Schools</i>	•	•		•			•		
Shared Leadership									
<i>R20: Building the Capacity to Lead</i>		•		•			•	•	
<i>R21: What the Teacher-Leader Needs from the Principal</i>		•		•			•		

Parameters					Related Themes						
	P9 Shared Resources	P10 Budget for Resources	P11 Literacy PD	P12 Parents	P13 Literacy Across Curriculum	System Reform	Change Knowledge and Expertise	Instruction and Assessment	Professional Learning	Planning	Shared Leadership
	•	•	•	•	•	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
				•			✓			✓	✓
			•	•					✓	✓	
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		•							✓		

The following principles, adapted from *Guidelines for Literacy* (Curriculum and Instructional Services, York Region District School Board, 2007), provide a vision of effective literacy instruction in the classroom. Application of these principles will promote improved student achievement in literacy learning and foster a commitment to lifelong learning.

1. Literacy is the responsibility of every teacher, in every classroom. Explicit literacy instruction is planned and takes place within and across all divisions and departments.

All teachers are teachers of literacy. By working collaboratively, teachers identify both explicit and implicit curriculum literacy expectations. Using this knowledge, and their in-depth knowledge of the learner, effective teachers select from their extensive repertoire the instructional methods and resources that will promote literacy learning for all of their students.

Teachers plan effective literacy instruction based on their deep understanding of educational theory and research that has been verified by classroom practice. Literacy instruction is planned and deliberately integrated into every subject/ program area in every classroom. Explicit literacy instruction is based on student literacy learning strengths and needs and is adjusted in response to ongoing assessment of student progress. Instruction is intentional, focused, and sustained, and includes providing students with examples of, and opportunities to, apply literacy skills and strategies in new situations and contexts.

2. Assessment drives instruction. Use of system, school, classroom, and individual student literacy achievement data directs ongoing decisions and actions.

Knowledge of the curriculum and characteristics of the learner allow teachers to engage effectively in ongoing classroom assessment. As part of daily literacy instruction, the collection of diagnostic and formative assessment data provides evidence of student achievement relative to the literacy expectations in each subject document and/or those expectations identified in the student's Individual Education Plan or Student Growth Plan.

Planning and implementing intervention strategies and selecting resources based on ongoing assessment of literacy achievement promotes success for all students. Teachers and administrators not only collect, analyze, and respond to achievement data but they also analyze, interpret, and make use of large-scale assessment data. It is the analysis, synthesis, and interpretation of all assessment information that informs the instructional decisions and actions that best support high levels of literacy achievement.

Student knowledge of themselves as learners is critical for ongoing growth and achievement. When students are taught to self-assess, track their literacy achievement, identify their strengths and needs, and plan next steps, they are true partners in the assessment process and are advocates for their own literacy learning.

3. Literacy instruction motivates, engages, and supports all students in their learning.

Effective literacy teachers provide focused, timely, and relevant instruction that motivates and engages all learners. They select instructional approaches and learning resources based on their knowledge of the strengths and needs of each learner, as well as their knowledge of required expectations.

Teachers determine the literacy strengths, needs, interests, and experiences of each student to differentiate instruction. When needed, individualized instruction (e.g., tutorials, remedial programs) and resources are provided. Literacy achievement is closely monitored and teaching is adjusted as needed.

4. Ongoing professional learning, collaboration, and leadership support effective literacy instruction.

Teachers, vice-principals, and principals require a theoretical and practical understanding of effective literacy instruction based on sound assessment data to meet the needs of all learners. As lifelong learners, they understand the need for professional development that leads to a deep understanding of literacy teaching and learning.

When colleagues work through activities such as discussing performance standards, leveling student work, and selecting exemplars, they develop a shared understanding of curriculum expectations and increase consistency and accuracy in assessing and interpreting student literacy performance.

When they engage in activities such as action research and lesson study, they can observe, reflect, and discuss the impact of their instructional practice.

When they engage in these relevant and authentic interactions they grow professionally, and they develop the knowledge and skill needed to provide leadership and support for their colleagues.

5. Literacy instructional practices are regularly reviewed and refined to ensure that the needs of all learners are met.

Individual, class, school, and system literacy achievement data are used to identify needs, inform instructional practices, and align resources. These data are also used for the ongoing review and refinement/revision of the classroom program, to determine the effectiveness of professional development activities and resources, and to inform future plans.

6. School, home, and community partnerships enhance literacy instruction.

All children come to school with individual competencies and prior experiences as a result of literacy learning that has occurred in the home and care environments. As key partners in their child's literacy learning, parents/guardians will continue to have significant impact throughout their child's school years.

Schools create the conditions for learning that advance each student's path towards becoming literate. Parents/guardians and community partners support instruction when they share their experiences and knowledge and support authentic literacy learning environments in the school and/or community.

Increased understanding and commitment to excellence in literacy instruction occurs when all partners have opportunities to learn about and discuss the literacy curriculum and the instructional methods and practices that support high levels of literacy achievement. When all partners work together and share an understanding of the student's current and future needs, instructional decision making is enhanced.

What Is Literacy Leadership?

Literacy is about more than reading and writing—it is about how we communicate in society. It is about social practices and relationships, about knowledge, language, and culture. Literacy... finds its place in our lives alongside other ways of communicating. Indeed, literacy itself takes many forms: on paper, on the computer screen, on TV, on posters and signs. Those who use literacy take it for granted—but those who cannot use it are excluded from much communication in today's world. Indeed, it is the excluded who can best appreciate the notion of literacy as freedom.

■ UNESCO statement for the United Nations Literacy Decade, 2003–2012

Literacy is defined as the development of a continuum of skills, knowledge, and attitudes that prepare all learners in a changing world community. It begins with the fundamental acquisition of skills in reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, representing, responding, and mathematics. It becomes the ability to understand, think, apply, and communicate effectively in all subject and program areas in a variety of ways and for a variety of purposes.

■ *System Plan for Continuous Improvement*, YRDSB, 2003.

To practise literacy leadership is a professional choice made by educators with a sense of moral purpose about their work and their responsibility to lead; literacy leadership is understood to occur not in a hierarchy, but rather in a collaborative inquiry/action research model. Literacy leaders embrace professional learning designed to provide a comprehensive, focused, and school-wide approach to literacy instruction. For such leaders, learning is an ongoing journey of inquiry. It involves engaging in reflective practice, taking risks, sharing, and constructing knowledge in group settings.

Educators are in the midst of moving beyond the traditional understanding of literacy as reading and writing. The amount of information available today, and the formats in which it is experienced, is overwhelming. It has forced educators to rethink what it means to be literate. Literacy is now understood to be the ability to make meaning across many forms of representation and in disciplines that have their own codes for communicating.

For educators, whose goal it is to support their students' ability to make meaning in multiple subject areas and communicate their own ideas in a range of text forms, literacy can no longer be solely the teaching of reading and writing print text. Literacy, and the leadership necessary for students to succeed, must encompass a broad approach and reflect integrated thinking across all subjects taught in schools.

With this understanding of how literacy impacts all subjects and classrooms from kindergarten to Grade 12, it is easy to see how a focus on improving literacy achievement for all students can be a powerful catalyst for change within a school and a district. The building of capacity for the teaching and learning of literacy is best supported by a shared leadership model, where district leaders, principals, and teachers work together to improve student learning. Such approaches require leadership at all levels, and support from all partners in the education process. The district administrator/chief superintendent/director of education must be more than an active supporter for change. She or he must directly remove barriers to implementation so that all schools—and all teachers—can move forward in their literacy instruction. Such support and intervention by the lead educator of a district dramatically increases the level of buy-in from others. As the degree of buy-in increases so too does the chance for the system to succeed in increasing student achievement. The educational theory and practice of literacy leadership involves educators working together to examine research, develop and implement an action plan, assess the impact of actions taken, and make intentional decisions about next steps.

The Value of the Toolkit

This Toolkit supports literacy leaders in a range of roles and contexts to lead professional learning in their communities. When learners work collaboratively with the Toolkit materials, high-quality professional dialogue will result and action taken. The table below presents common questions that literacy leaders may ask about literacy learning and outlines how the Toolkit can help address these questions.

Literacy Leadership

Literacy leadership combines theory and practice at the District, School, and University levels, and is about...

The teaching and learning of literacy	Effective leadership practices	Effective system and school reform
Monitoring the effectiveness of instruction that is informed by sound assessment practices	Data-informed decision making	Developing change knowledge and expertise
	The development of reflective practitioners	Capacity building with a focus on results

District leaders ask

How are our students doing?
 How effective are our professional learning experiences for teachers?
 How effective are our schools?

The Toolkit provides

- Planning tools for determining learning needs, getting started, and continuous improvement
- Strategies for building learning communities characterized by shared leadership at all levels of the organization
- Support for facilitation of focused dialogue and collaborative learning that leads to implementation

School leaders ask

How are our students doing?
 How are our teachers doing?
 How effective is our school?

The Toolkit provides

- Tools for planning professional learning that align with the goals and outcomes of a school
- Videos and viewing activities that highlight powerful instructional practice informed by quality assessment
- Professional readings and activities to develop and deepen understanding
- Collaborative structures for determining starting points and generating next steps for learning and implementation

University literacy leaders ask

How are our students doing?
 How does our program support strong instructional and assessment leadership?

The Toolkit provides

- Strategies and tools for working together to develop effective professional practice
- Videos and professional readings with guiding questions and activities that prompt thinking and deepen understanding
- Facilitation support for creating powerful learning environments for students and encouraging reflection on professional practice

How the Tools Work Together

Video and print material can be used separately with adult learning groups or can be combined in a variety of ways to meet a range of needs. Multiple videos, selected to address a particular focus, can be shared in a professional learning session as can multiple readings from the *Research Resource Book*.

The following chart suggests a range of ways that professional learning sessions can be structured using the video and reading components of the Toolkit. A skilled facilitator will find many ways to mix and match the video clips and readings to best meet group needs.

Using Single Video

Sharing the focus for learning
Building an understanding of the parameter
Video viewing: Identifying Key Understandings
Exploring, Analyzing, Planning for next steps

Using Single Reading

Sharing the focus for learning
Making connections to a parameter or to a Backgrounder theme
Professional reading (content) with processing activity
Identifying and/or sharing of next steps for learning

Using Multiple Videos

Sharing the focus for learning
Building an understanding of the parameters
Viewing of two videos: Identifying Key Understandings for each
Exploring, Analyzing, Planning for next steps

Complementary Use of a Video and a Reading Together

Sharing the focus for learning
In the most appropriate order:
Building an understanding of the parameter through video viewing: Identifying Key Understandings
Making connections to the parameter or theme:
Professional reading (with processing activity optional)
Exploring, Analyzing, Planning for next steps

Carol Rolheiser An essay written for this resource (full version available in the *Facilitator's Resource*)

The Backgrounder is woven into all aspects of the Toolkit. It details six broad themes that underlie literacy leadership and leadership supportive of change:

- System Reform
- Change Knowledge and Expertise
- Instruction and Assessment
- Professional Learning
- Planning
- Shared Leadership

It is considered suggested reading for facilitators as they consider what focus for learning to take with their groups.

Introduction

To improve student learning is the quest of schools and school systems worldwide. As educators work together to increase student achievement, they look to evidence from research literature and from their own data to guide their classroom, school, and district policies and practices. The research does not provide one path or blueprint to school and system improvement; however, the knowledge base provides opportunities to learn from the work of others and strategies to consider in the effort to maintain cycles of improvement.

Joseph Murphy and Peter Hallinger note that there is “a growing recognition that change is a process, a quest for improvement rather than a search for a final resting place” (as quoted in Anderson 2007).

Understanding school improvement and system reform focused on literacy teaching and learning is hard work. Your team is invited to begin this exploration by first reading the article “Accomplishing Districtwide Reform” (Sharratt and Fullan, 2006) in the *Research Resource Book* (pp. 53–61) as an effective way to understand the development of the 13 Parameters, and then to explore the six related themes documented in the Backgrounder and the 13 Parameters presented in this Toolkit. You will likely generate many insights that can guide your plans for school improvement. Your work together as change agents will also help you build capacity in teaching and learning so that you can better meet your students' literacy needs.

As educators focusing on school and system improvement, you will find that several key research themes provide important insights: System Reform, Change Knowledge and Expertise, Instruction and Assessment, Professional Learning, Planning, and Shared Leadership. These themes are outlined on the pages that follow.

System Reform

A more sophisticated understanding of how districts implement large-scale change and contribute to school efforts to improve student learning has evolved. One study, for example, shows that attention to several dimensions increased a district's capacity to change and improve: these dimensions are (1) shared vision; (2) knowledge management; (3) instructional focus; (4) the building of districtwide leadership capacity; (5) accountability, evaluation, and feedback; and (6) the building of coherence (Mascall, Rolheiser, Wallace, Anderson, and Fullan 2005). Fullan, Bertani, and Quinn have also contributed to this understanding. Their 2004 study identifies 10 key lessons for districtwide reform, including collective moral purpose, capacity building, ongoing learning, productive conflict, and the need to connect with external partners.

For many districts, a focus on literacy has been instrumental to reform. Literacy can be a powerful catalyst for change because it provides a critical entry point and focus for schools in enhancing teaching and improving student achievement. With careful attention to the social process, such schools can simultaneously create a climate of change within them that, over time, influences the strength of the collaborative teaching and learning cultures. If this climate of thoughtful, evidence-based change can be created in schools across a district, the likelihood that quality teaching and learning will be sustained increases.

Change Knowledge and Expertise

What many effective leaders understand is that in order to succeed in making educational changes and achieving large-scale sustainable reform, change knowledge and expertise are needed.

Change knowledge includes an understanding of the change process, or how people and systems interact to produce desired outcomes. When educators develop change expertise, they can better apply change knowledge in their everyday work, thereby making it more likely that good ideas and practices will take hold and be sustained (Rolheiser, Fullan, and Edge 2003). As Fullan (2004, 2) notes, "The presence of change knowledge does not guarantee success, but its absence ensures failure."

Developing change expertise means that leaders can apply principles and innovative practices gleaned from a larger knowledge base to issues and challenges specific to their context. Informal and formal leaders may need to understand and address resistance, the "implementation dip," strategies for implementing collaborative work and enabling learning cultures, the making of coherence, the importance of persistence and resilience, differentiated support for teachers, and the building of leadership capacity. As they make intentional change, leaders come to realize that they can be

positive agents in developing a new culture in schools and systems. Such efforts help schools become environments where collaboration is well valued and the quest for improvement, the norm.

Instruction and Assessment

Systematic study over more than 30 years has caused educators to feel confident that certain instructional and assessment practices make a positive difference to student learning. As Stanovich and Stanovich (2003) note, given the many single studies, competing theories, and related explanations often reported in educational literature, when researchers begin to agree that evidence supports one theory over another, educators can more clearly determine directions that make a difference.

One highly helpful method for dealing with varied research findings in education is meta-analysis. Through quantitative synthesis of research findings, this approach helps answer the question of how much of a difference a given instructional or assessment approach might make. Meta-analysis is now a critical tool in guiding use of such powerful teaching and learning strategies as cooperative learning; advance organizers; synectics, or an approach to creative thinking and problem solving that uses analogy or metaphor as its major tool; and memory models (Rolheiser 1986; Joyce, Showers, and Rolheiser, Bennett, 1987; Bennett and Rolheiser 2001). Other syntheses have also given educators greater confidence in using strategies that incorporate non-linguistic representations (such as imagery, graphic organizers, physical models, mental and drawn pictures, and kinesthetic activity), generating and testing hypotheses, and identifying similarities and differences, to name a few (Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock 2001).

Educators face the collective challenge to increase the widespread use of approaches that have an evidence-based track record; however, use of these approaches is not enough. There must be more sustained efforts to build teacher knowledge and precision in the thoughtful use of skills and strategies that can meet learners' unique daily needs.

When teachers work to deepen their understanding of evidence-based teaching methods and their skill in using them in various subjects and with different learners, school improvement efforts become more powerful. The research base clearly establishes that school improvement is about improving the quality of teaching and learning that goes on in every classroom with every learner. That means teachers need to be literate in all forms of assessment—diagnostic, formative, and summative—and able to identify what each learner can or cannot do. Assessment drives daily instructional decisions. That means teachers should purposefully scaffold learning to move each learner to a higher level of achievement. Such precision makes it necessary that teachers learn constantly and develop instructional and assessment expertise throughout their careers.

Professional Learning

Learning is at the centre of what educators do. Daily, school educators strive to create positive classroom cultures where student learning can flourish. When educators also work to create communities in schools and districts where adults learn from and with one another—and develop their change capacity—that goal can better be achieved.

Knowledge sharing (making tacit knowledge explicit and available to others) and knowledge building are essential for schools and districts focused on improvement; however, they can be challenging to achieve. At times knowledge sits in pockets, not circulated or shared effectively (Mascall, Rolheiser, Wallace, Anderson, and Fullan 2005). Increasingly, schools and districts are focusing on ways to support job-embedded learning, or learning that occurs as school educators engage in their daily activities. “Job-embedded learning is learning by doing, reflecting on the experience, and then generating and sharing new insights and learning with oneself and others” (Wood and McQuarrie, Jr., 1999, 10). While many formal and informal approaches to job-embedded learning—for example, study groups, book studies, lesson study, action research, peer coaching, and school meetings—exist, what is key are the opportunities to collaborate for professional learning within the workplace on a regular basis.

According to the Ontario Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat (2006, 1), “effective professional learning for today’s teachers should include the following features:

- It must be grounded in inquiry and reflection, be participant-driven, and focus on improving planning and instruction.
- It must be collaborative, involving the sharing of knowledge and focusing on communities of practice rather than on individual teachers.
- It must be ongoing, intensive and supported by modeling, coaching and the collective solving of specific problems so that teachers can implement their new learning and sustain changes in practice.
- It must be connected to and derived from teachers’ work with students—teaching, assessing, observing and reflecting on the processes of learning and development.”

What is apparent from the work of educators who have studied and synthesized the literature on professional learning (see, for example, Hirsh and Killion 2007) is that in order to realize the potential for student learning, teachers and administrators must focus on the learning cultures they are creating for themselves. Such cultures create opportunities for educators to learn from and with one another, across units and departments within schools, and between schools within a district or region. By expanding the base of ideas, and connecting practitioner wisdom to the broader research and knowledge base of the teaching profession, the possibilities for improvement of student learning are boundless.

Planning

Most schools engage in some form of planning process for improvement. Such a process assumes school personnel will take ongoing individual and collective opportunities to improve the quality of learning and teaching so that students benefit. Ideally, the process is also linked to other levels of the system, be it the district or government.

The challenge at both school and district levels is to ensure that the planning process is not a superficial exercise unconnected to classroom practices and the learning of students, or professional learning for teachers. Planning should be an important and meaningful process for all schools, something that also connects to system priorities and, as a result, helps create greater coherence across a district. The planning process will identify goals, indicators, and responsibilities for monitoring and reporting student learning; at the same time, it will help with alignment of priorities and the reduction of overload and fragmentation.

Useful planning practices emerge from assessment for learning cultures. In such cultures, educators gather and retrieve data on student learning; analyze data for more detailed understanding; develop action plans based on the data in order to make improvements; and articulate and discuss how students are doing with parents and external groups (Fullan 2004).

It is important that at both school and district levels the planning process becomes a routine feature that engages many persons in determining future directions, fosters inquiry, and helps educators celebrate successes and focus on areas needing improvement.

Shared Leadership

When the number of individuals in an organization skilled at influencing others grows, leadership becomes spread throughout the organization. It is clear that school leaders—both principals and teachers—working together to improve student learning are helping school districts to implement literacy initiatives (Mascall and Rolheiser 2007).

School improvement efforts become more powerful under Shared Leadership, but several conditions must be met first. Teachers need to feel empowered to exercise professional responsibility and supported by principals as instructional leaders. For them to share leadership at the school level, a safe environment needs to be established. Teachers need to feel supported and valued in order to take risks. Likewise, as principals share power and decision making with teachers, they become more vulnerable. They need support at the district level so that school team efforts for school improvement will be sustained in the face of attrition and changes in personnel. Finally, the understanding by a school-based team that their collective knowledge and skills are more powerful than any individual's expertise is vital to their success (Patterson and Rolheiser 2004).

When teachers take on leadership responsibilities focused on teaching and learning—for example, developing shared literacy beliefs and understandings, planning for professional learning, and strategizing for individual student learning—they move to a different level of commitment. This commitment can deepen as teachers and administrators share their skills and expertise. As leadership teams begin to see the results of their collaborative efforts on student learning, members can feel further empowered.

The distribution of leadership responsibilities and roles both in schools and across a district are integral to creating norms of continuous improvement (Anderson 2007). In adopting a distributed leadership model, leaders need to be able to identify the strengths of individuals and to strategically align the use of local expertise to build capacity focused on results at both school and district levels (see Leithwood, Mascall, and Strauss 2008 to explore current research evidence). The optimum arrangement of shared leadership functions and influence across roles within a particular setting, however, is highly dependent on the availability of local expertise for key leadership tasks, and on the principal's orientation to use of that expertise in the pursuit of goals for school improvement (Anderson, Moore, and Sun 2008).

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13 Parameters

A Literacy Leadership Toolkit

Whole-school change takes time, planning, and commitment. *13 Parameters: A Literacy Leadership Toolkit* is the ideal companion for any administrator or school leader charged with providing leadership in literacy education.



This comprehensive, easy-to-use toolkit is based on 13 Parameters that have proven to yield the greatest improvement in student literacy achievement. Built on the concept that each district and school is unique, leaders can select the parameters most relevant to their learning community. Through professional dialogue, activities, readings, and video footage, participants utilize the materials to further the goal of enhancing literacy instruction and student achievement in their school or district.

Components of the Toolkit

Facilitator's Resource

Background notes, facilitation considerations, detailed plans for exploring each parameter, viewing activities, feedback forms, and related line masters

Research Resource Book

More than 20 published readings written by experts in the field of education, with abstracts, links to parameters, and reading activities

Parameter Cards

13 large-format cards, ideal for use when planning professional learning sessions and in-session activities

13 Parameters DVD

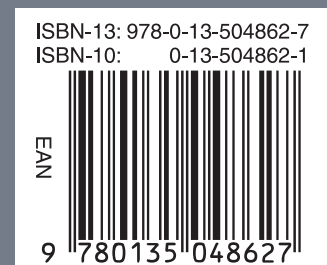
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