

# Becoming a PRIME Leader



*One thing is clear about the stages of systemic school improvement efforts—a body of expert knowledge is required to carry them off.*

—Elmore, 2007, p. 32



## The PRIME Leadership Principles in Action

The PRIME Leadership Framework describes four principles, each with three specific indicators that together represent the state of conditions that needs to exist in our schools if every student is to experience improved achievement in mathematics. The trending toward these conditions is dependent upon the expert knowledge development of the mathematics education leader. As Richard Elmore (2007) explains in *Let's Act Like Professionals*, this knowledge will be partly technical (instructional expertise and the accompanying knowledge of practice that promotes adult learning), partly managerial (knowledge about organizational design and resource allocations), and partly sociopolitical (knowledge about how to make the institutional connections necessary to sustain an improvement strategy over time).

Thus, the PRIME Leadership Framework calls on mathematics education leaders to advance our technical, managerial, and sociopolitical knowledge as well as the knowledge of those we lead. PRIME leaders will create working and teaching conditions that will do the following:

- Address gaps in mathematics achievement expectations and access for all student populations.
- Require pursuit of meaningful, relevant, diverse, rigorous, and successful mathematics experiences for every child.
- Require alignment, coherence, and congruence to the curriculum and assessment of the curriculum.
- Sustain the collaborative discussion and use of aligned formative and summative assessments necessary to inform teaching and learning.

These adult leadership actions provide the focus for the knowledge and skills growth leaders must pursue.

Ultimately, a PRIME leader seeks to discover and fulfill his or her leadership potential. The PRIME leader seeks continuous growth as new knowledge of best practice emerges from research and practice. Mathematics programs will only get better when leaders open themselves and other teachers to new ideas, risk imaginatively, and enthusiastically inspire those they lead with a desire to learn and grow together. It is the PRIME leader who will close the “knowing-doing” gap between our knowledge about how to enhance student achievement and the commitment to actions we must take as a result of that knowledge.

As has been noted, student achievement is unlikely to advance much beyond current levels unless mathematics education leaders convert the indicators into a daily reality and exercise professional responsibility and accountability for their own practice and the practice of those teachers they lead. When leaders pursue teacher collaboration and view learning together as a professional obligation, this vision of success for every student can become a reality.

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The stages of PRIME leadership growth provide a template for the expert knowledge and actions needed to lead others toward this vision. For NCSM members, and all those leading mathematics education improvement efforts, the PRIME Framework can guide our intentional leadership efforts: “Leadership is about learning that leads to constructive change” (Lambert, 1998, p. 9). Mathematics teachers cannot significantly improve their craft in isolation from others. Adult teaching and student learning improve when leaders create “formats, structures, [and cultures for collaborative discussions] that reflect change and assess current practice” (Glickman, 2002, p. 4). The PRIME principles provide the first steps in leading others to become engaged and committed professional mathematics education leaders.

The PRIME leader also understands that the technical and analytical skills described in the PRIME document will not be sufficient. Using extensive research, Goleman and colleagues (2002) assert that relational skills account for nearly three times as much impact on organizational change and performance as do analytical skills. Relational leaders:

- Listen to their colleagues without interrupting or judging.
- Respect confidences, never betraying a secret or private conversation.
- Practice empathy through deliberate inquiry.

The PRIME leader understands that sincere passion for the mission described in this document must be exhibited every day with genuine concern and interest for those he or she leads. Research shows that “in organizations of all types, both public and private, large and small, for-profit and nonprofit, relationships—particularly with leaders—are one of the single greatest predictors of employee performance, satisfaction and turnover” (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999 as cited in Reeves, 2006, p. 42). Thus, the capacity building of positive relationships with others must become an intentional pursuit of a PRIME leader.

The PRIME indicators and actions are also intended as a framework for reflection and self-assessment. Reflections on leadership practice should be an individual and a collective practice stimulated by discussion with others. Veteran leaders should model reflective practices for novice leaders. Structured conversations around the stages for each leadership indicator provide an intentional focus for which areas of leadership would be most important for short and long-term focus. It would be expected that every leader eventually pursues Stage 2 leadership, and if appropriate to job or career expectations, moves into Stage 3.

The PRIME Leadership Framework describes the “what” leaders are to pursue and become. The next question will be “how.” How will we achieve the various indicators and stages for mathematics education leadership? These answers will be provided by our collective intuitive and research-informed understanding of what really works and by our teaching and learning from one another. We must dedicate ourselves to learning together on how to deliver and live the core

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values of equity, teaching and learning, curriculum, and assessment described in PRIME. The benefactors of this pursuit—our teachers and our students—are counting on it.

In the opening epigraph to this document on page iii, Kouzes and Posner remind us that “a leader’s legacy is the legacy of many.” Ultimately, the success of a mathematics education leader resides in the impact the leader leaves on the next generation of mathematics education leaders and programs. When leaders decide to *make a difference*, they choose to take a stand and commit themselves and others to a complex, yet crystal-clear set of leadership actions. PRIME describes those actions upon which each leader must take a stand. Every leader is capable of making commitments on things that matter and giving meaning to values that will significantly impact student learning. This is what it means to live a courageous leadership life. This is what it means to *be* a PRIME leader.

## The PRIME Leadership Framework

Principle	Indicator 1	Indicator 2	Indicator 3
<b>Equity Leadership</b>	Every teacher addresses gaps in mathematics achievement expectations for all student populations.	Every teacher provides each student access to relevant and meaningful mathematics experiences.	Every teacher works interdependently in a collaborative learning community to erase inequities in student learning.
<b>Teaching and Learning Leadership</b>	Every teacher pursues the successful learning of mathematics for every student.	Every teacher implements research-informed best practices and uses effective instructional planning and teaching strategies.	Every teacher participates in continuous and meaningful mathematics professional development and learning in order to improve his or her practice.
<b>Curriculum Leadership</b>	Every teacher implements the local curriculum and uses instructional resources that are coherent and reflect state standards and national curriculum recommendations.	Every teacher implements a curriculum that is focused on relevant and meaningful mathematics.	Every teacher implements the intended curriculum with needed intervention and makes certain it is attained by every student.
<b>Assessment Leadership</b>	Every teacher uses student assessments that are congruent and aligned by grade level or course content.	Every teacher uses formative assessment processes to inform teacher practice and student learning.	Every teacher uses summative assessment data to evaluate mathematics grade-level, course, and program effectiveness.