

## EXCERPTED FROM HOW LEADERSHIP INFLUENCES STUDENT LEARNING SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

The Wallace Foundation; 2004

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Like every district, every school is in some fashion unique. Responding well to such uniqueness, in addition to providing the leadership basics, is crucial for the success of school leaders. But large numbers of schools share two challenges that demand responses by all or many educational leaders if they are to be successful in improving teaching and learning. One common impetus to change faced by almost all educational leaders in the United States is the extensive set of state policies designed to hold schools more accountable (Leithwood, 2001). The second challenge, faced by fewer, but still large numbers of leaders, is the conditions associated with diverse student populations (Riehl, in press).

To be successful in highly accountable policy contexts, school leaders need to:

- **Create and sustain a competitive school.** This set of practices is important for district and school leaders when they find themselves in competition for students in education “markets” which feature alternatives to existing public schools such as charter, magnet and private schools perhaps supported through tuition tax credits.
- **Empower others to make significant decisions.** This is a key set of leadership practices, particularly when accountability mechanisms include giving a greater voice to community stakeholders as in the case of parent-controlled school councils.
- **Provide instructional guidance.** While this is an important set of leadership practices in almost all districts and schools aiming to improve student learning, it takes on a special character in the context of more explicit grounds for assessing the work of educators, as for example, the setting of professional standards and their use for purposes of ongoing professional development and personnel evaluation.
- **Develop and implement strategic school improvement plans.** When schools are required to have school improvement plans, as most districts now demand, school leaders need to master skills associated with productive planning and the implementation of such plans. Virtually all district leaders need to be proficient in large-scale strategic planning processes.