



ONTARIO EDUCATION SERVICES CORPORATION

## Professional Development Program for School Board Trustees

Modules

# 2 Effective Governance for Student Achievement and Well-Being: Boards Matter!

## Reading

### **Learning From Leadership Project: The Connection Between Educational Leadership and Student Learning**

*Education in Canada, CSBA*

The Learning from Leadership Project: Investigating the Links to Improved Student Learning is a joint 2010 research report from the University of Toronto's Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and the University of Minnesota's Centre for Applied Research and Educational Improvement, commissioned by the Wallace Foundation.

This study provides further evidence of the direct relationship between strong educational leadership and school conditions, as well as the indirect relationship between strong educational leadership and student learning.

As we began our work five years ago, we argued that leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school. Five years later, we are even more confident about this claim.

The project's aim was to identify and explore the various kinds of leadership in schools and districts that are needed to improve student learning. This project examined other contributors to effective leadership practices in the schools by including participants at the school, community and district level. A wider definition of leadership was explored by identifying and examining three types of leadership and their effects on student learning: **collective, shared and distributed.**



Four fundamental beliefs of leadership were outlined in this report:

Adequate analysis of leadership must identify all relevant sources of educational leadership, examine actual leadership practices, and distinguish among the effects of school, district and state level leadership on student learning.

Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn in school.

A critical understanding of leadership recognizes two core functions: to provide direction; and to exercise influence. Each of these is key to initiatives aimed at improving student learning.

Leaders who strike a balance between stability and change emphasize two priorities in the direction they provide and the influence they exercise; they work to develop and support people to do their best, and they work to redesign their organization to improve effectiveness.

The study describes three integrative concepts of leadership. These concepts are a precursor to the conditions required for effective leadership to develop.

*Expectations and accountability* represent a key element of effective leadership enacted at the state, district, school and classroom levels.

*Efficacy and support* are essential to moving from the desire to change to changes in behaviour; greater efficacy leads to effective leadership practices.

*Engagement and stakeholder influences* allow successful leaders to make wide-reaching connections. Higher performing schools solicit more input and engagement from a wider variety of stakeholders.

District leadership is important in bringing these elements together and supporting the actions described by these concepts. This report concludes that “districts have the ability to formulate effective strategies and support practices that enable principals, teachers and students to thrive; in addition, leaders’ potential influence are the central figures and catalysts for lasting educational reform.”