

MISSOURI LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

Unpacking the MLDS

Domains – Instructional Leadership

There is little argument that of the five domains of leadership identified within the Missouri Leadership Development System (MLDS), Instructional Leadership speaks to a fundamental priority for educators. The challenge comes from the reality that the demands of the other four domains often have a way of keeping principals separated from this essential aspect of their practice.

The instructional leadership domain focuses in three basic considerations.

- Guaranteed and viable curriculum
- Effective instructional practice
- Coordinated and effective use of assessments

While organizing and improving curriculum and assessment can be time consuming, practically speaking, they address two fundamental questions: What do we want students to learn? And. How do we know they have learned it? It is what happens in between developing and aligning these two structural aspects of teaching and learning that recognizing and developing excellent instruction becomes an essential skill of truly effective instructional leaders.

How is a principal, whose content expertise is not likely to cover the entire curriculum, supposed to move the needle when it comes to improving instruction? There is a difference between knowing what you see and seeing what you know. Recognizing and developing excellent instruction is not so much about subject area content as it is about expanding one's knowledge base when it comes to instructional practice and guiding others to improvement. Think of it in terms of this logic model:

- Instructional quality is the prime mover of student achievement.
- Skillful administrators can learn to recognize patterns of excellent instruction.
- Adult learners can learn, grow, and develop substantially.
- Teachers apply new skills best when skillful feedback and coaching is employed.
- Administrators can improve their feedback and coaching skills through practice.

Through participation in the MLDS, principals will develop their ability to:

- Observe classroom instruction actively and skillfully.

- Recognize and name specific patterns of excellent instruction using a common professional language.
- Choose promising topics for feedback to optimize teacher growth.
- Provide episodes of growth-evoking feedback and coaching to teachers.
- Link individual teacher feedback to overall school instructional goals.

It would be unreasonable to expect a principal to possess this level of knowledge and skill on their first day, however, for the students you serve, the clock is ticking. What are you doing to enhance your development as an instructional leader? The fundamental focus of the MLDS is to serve as a comprehensive and progressive sequence of professional learning designed to cultivate the dispositions, knowledge, and skills necessary to serve as an effective leader. Not just today, but over the course of your career as a principal.

The success of your faculty, staff, and students is not only a matter of their effort, but also a reflection of your ability to build your capacity as a professional educator. Please accept this as an invitation to elevate your leadership practice by contacting the leadership development specialist at your [Regional Professional Development Center](#).