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The Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model

**Reframing the Right Balance
for Instructional and Operational Leadership**

REPORT

Beverly G. Carbaugh and Robert J. Marzano

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Introduction

After more than five years of national implementation of the Marzano School Leader Evaluation Model, we are pleased to announce a significant update focused on creating a critical balance and synergy between *instructional leadership* and *operational leadership*.

This updated model, the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model, is designed to encourage and evaluate leader growth. The new framework breaks down large categories of behavior into individual elements, allowing school leaders to self-assess and guide professional practice and growth. As part of the process, the school leader is evaluated on how effectively he or she is getting the desired results of implementing these elements. This conceptual framework undergirds the model and supports improved performance and professional growth; thus, evaluation becomes the measurement of the school leader's progress toward specific elements or standards within the framework. If a school leader wants to grow his or her practice, the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model serves as a roadmap.

Key Objectives of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model

- Recognize the responsibility of the school leader to find balance and synergy between instructional and operational leadership
- Recognize the importance of supporting equal opportunity for each student
- Clearly define the role of the school leader in keeping the school focused on its core values
- Support a caring and collaborative learning environment where all stakeholders embrace a growth mindset
- Keep a constant focus on school growth and student achievement results

The revised objectives for the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model provides a *balanced dual focus on instructional and operational leadership*. Instructional leadership requires a large skill set, but as any school leader will tell you, mastery of those skills alone will not guarantee a school's success. There must be a critical balance between instructional leadership and operational leadership. Multiple factors create this balance and interplay, and the updated model recognizes those factors and their importance.

Additionally, our definition of instructional leadership has continued to evolve under the impetus of new research, and the updated elements in the model reflect this evolution. A large body of research over the past decade has underscored the significant, if indirect, role the school leader plays in student learning. This research has in turn helped to shift the focus of our national conversations around school leadership. Where once the school leader's primary responsibilities lay in administrative duties related to the smooth daily operations of the school building—the school leader as building manager—in recent years that focus has shifted to an emphasis on instructional leadership. A 2013 Wallace Foundation report, for example, noted that “historically, public school principals were seen as school managers ... only in the last few decades has the emphasis shifted to academic expectations for all (p. 7).” Citing a Vanderbilt study, the Wallace report authors go on to say:

This change comes in part as a response to twin realizations: Career success in a global economy depends on a strong education; for all segments of U.S. society to be able to compete fairly, the yawning gap in academic achievement between disadvantaged and advantaged students needs to narrow. In a school, that begins with a principal's spelling out “high standards and rigorous learning goals,” Vanderbilt University researchers assert with underlined emphasis. Specifically, they say, “The research literature over the last quarter century has consistently supported the notion that having high expectations for all, including clear and public standards, is one key to closing the achievement gap between advantaged and less advantaged students and for raising the overall achievement of all students (p. 7).”

In *School Leadership for Results*, we discussed the explosion of empirical research into school leadership best practices that followed on the heels of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium's (ISLLC) original Standards for School Leaders in 1996. Those standards were updated in 2008 and were updated again in 2015 as the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL). In their rationale for the 2015 standards, the PSEL authors note that:

The profession of educational leadership has developed significantly. Educators have a better understanding of how and in what ways effective leadership contributes to student achievement. An expanding base of knowledge from research and

practice shows that educational leaders exert influence on student achievement by creating challenging but also caring and supportive conditions conducive to each student's learning. They relentlessly develop and support teachers, create positive working conditions, effectively allocate resources, construct appropriate organizational policies and systems, and engage in other deep and meaningful work outside of the classroom that has a powerful impact on what happens inside it. Given this growing knowledge—and the changing demands of the job—educational leaders need new standards to guide their practice in directions that will be the most productive and beneficial to students (p.1).

The updated model reflects these new insights and pressures, and specifically addresses the emphases of the 2015 PSEL in our reformulation of the domains and elements. The new PSEL, for example, emphasizes Core Values, Curriculum and Instruction, Community of Care and Support, Professional Development for Staff, Collaboration, and Operational Capabilities among other areas of importance. You will find these recognized in the domains of our updated model. But before our description of the specific domains, it's important to understand what we mean by instructional leadership and operational leadership and how these two leadership capacities are interdependent and critical to the successful functioning of the school.

The Instructional/Operational Leader

True instructional leadership requires a deep understanding of, and commitment to, the interconnected areas of instruction, curriculum, and assessment in the service of optimizing student learning (Dufour & Marzano, 2011). Various definitions of instructional leadership have been proposed over the years, but there is general agreement that the term implies a deep involvement with teaching and learning. The school leader's involvement may take many forms: leading and supporting teacher learning teams, providing rich classroom observation feedback, modeling effective instruction, providing professional development opportunities, supporting standards-based instruction, and ensuring equal learning opportunities for all students, for example. In these capacities, the instructional leader is highly visible and accessible; he or she distributes necessary resources and clears distractions so that everyone in the school can focus on what matters most: student learning.

It's not much of a stretch to see how instructional leadership is intimately connected to operational leadership. Standard 9 (Operations and Management) of the PSEL, for example, makes explicit that the goal of streamlined operations is to ensure students' academic success and well-being. The elements of this standard include optimizing teachers' professional capacity to address each student's learning needs; acquiring

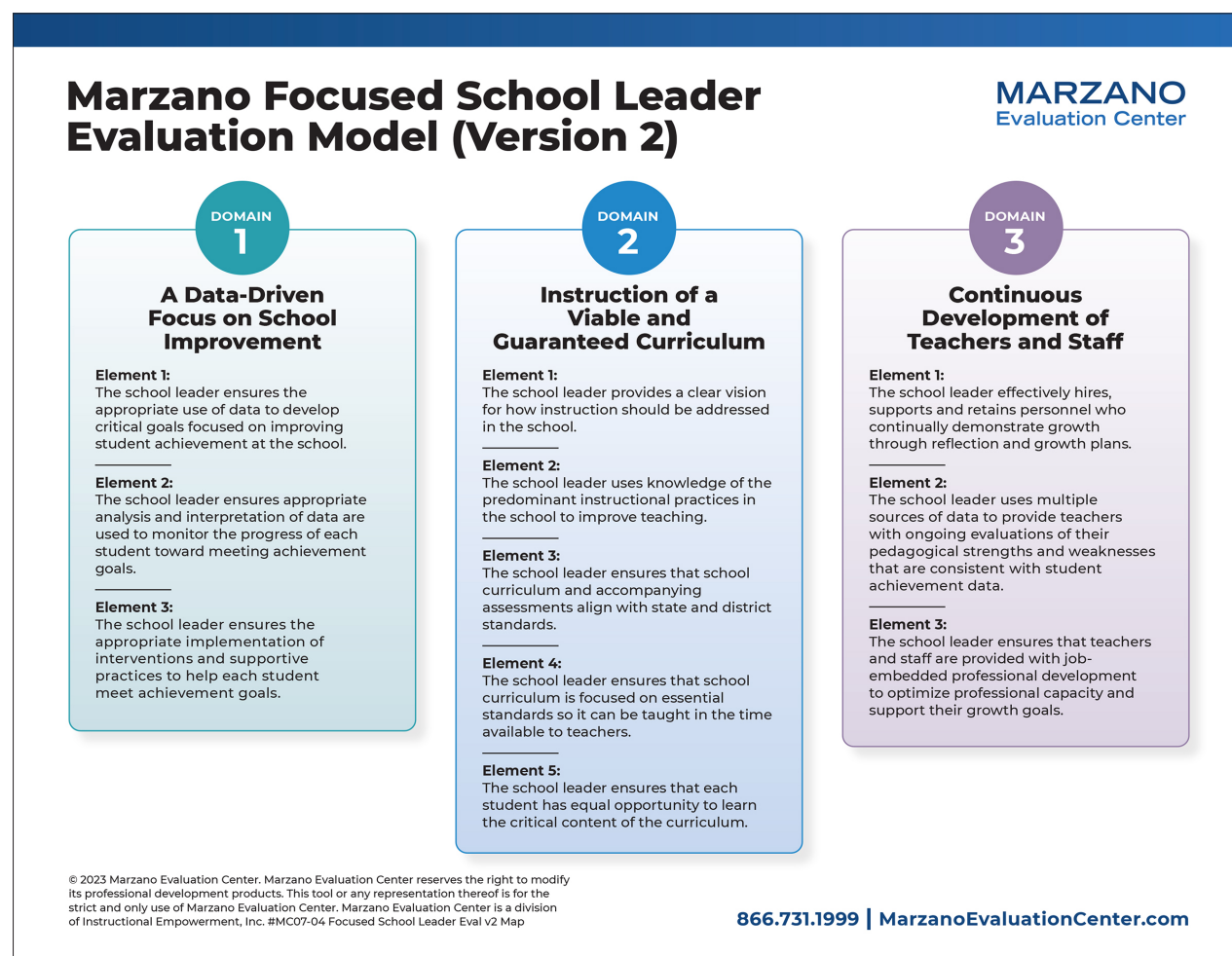
resources to support curriculum, instruction, and assessment; protecting teacher time from disruption; maintaining data systems to provide actionable information for classroom and school improvement; and developing systems for managing conflict resolution. It's quite clear how these aspects of operational leadership would directly impact instruction and improve the conditions for student learning. Operational leadership refers to how the leader operates all aspects of the functioning of the school: culture, climate, safety, and the budget. In the updated model, instructional leadership duties are emphasized in Domains 1, 2, and 3, and operational responsibilities the focus in Domains 4, 5, and 6.

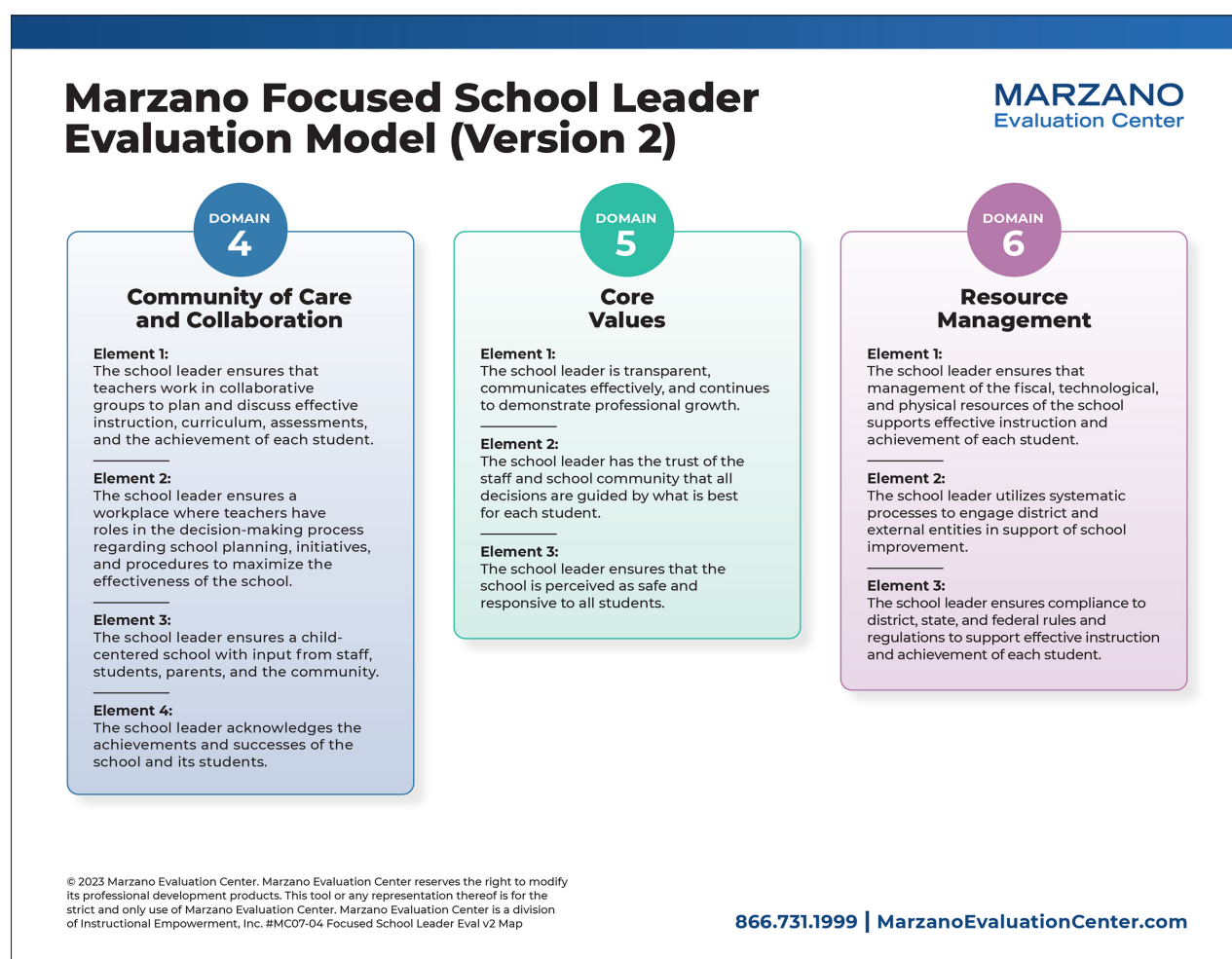
The Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model makes these connections between instructional and operational leadership explicit and balances these interconnected responsibilities. The model's protocols have been revised to include a specific desired effect for each element and an increased number of sample evidences. We will now introduce the six domains and 21 elements, then examine an example protocol that includes broader evidences and the new desired effect for the element.

Overview of the Six Domains

A comprehensive growth and evaluation system is a framework that addresses all the actions, decisions, and work that a school leader does on a daily basis. School leaders can use such a framework to measure all their actions and to self assess their behaviors and responsibilities.

The second valuable aspect of a framework is that it encourages every educator in the system to use a common professional language, and to use common names for specific behaviors. A framework allows everyone in a system to recognize and talk about behavior using common descriptors related to instruction or key performance indicators. Just as in the professions of law or medicine, educators need to have a common language to speak with accuracy about what they are doing and observing.





*Figure 1: Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model Version 2.
Note: Version 1 of the model is available upon request.*

As with the original, the updated model is an objective, evidence-based model that evaluates school leader performance against specific criteria, alignment to professional standards, and specific evidences. The revised model integrates many of the criteria and behaviors leaders need to demonstrate into more focused domains and additionally emphasizes the operational responsibilities necessary to support optimal student learning.

The Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model now contains six, rather than five, domains that define the major job responsibilities of the school leader, and the language of the domains has been adjusted to reflect current literature and research regarding school leaders (see the overview of research on page 15). As illustrated in the figure above, **Domain 1, A Data Driven Focus on School Improvement**, (previously A Data-Driven Focus on Student Achievement), reflects a broader perspective regarding student achievement while continuing to emphasize the use of data to drive student achievement, which drives school improvement.

The updated **Domain 2, Instruction of a Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum**, collapses Domains 2 and 3 of the original model (incorporating two elements from Continuous Improvement of Instruction and three from A Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum). This change reflects the interconnectedness of curriculum and instruction as well as the necessity that both align with rigorous state standards. A major part of an instructional leader's job begins with a clear vision of what teaching looks like in the school.

Domain 3, Continuous Development of Teachers and Staff, is a new domain focused on operational and human capital management. Although the school leader's primary focus is on improving teacher practice, all staff must grow in their areas of responsibility. The new Domain 3 makes that balance clear: It is critical for the school leader to manage all people in the building. In the original model, this focus was addressed by Elements 2, 4, and 5 of Domain 2.

Domain 4, Community of Care and Collaboration, retains its emphasis from the previous Domain 4 (Cooperation and Collaboration) with a slight shift in focus. The aim is to promote a broader approach to thinking about the school leader's role in building a caring school community. This includes the responsibility to ensure fairness in instruction, embracing differences among students and staff, and emphasizing collaborative teamwork so teachers can plan effective instruction. Domain 4 addresses the way a school does its work, looking at how staff forms a unified, transparent, and collaborative environment so that the school functions at optimal levels. Thus, Domain 4 emphasizes the operational side of the school leader's responsibilities, and now contains four, rather than five, elements.

Domain 5, Core Values, represents a shift from the previous domain name of School Climate to broader ways of thinking about the values that the school leader is committed to: transparency, trust, cultural responsiveness, and safety. These are the values that the school leader instills in the school so that they are perceived by all stakeholders. Domain 5 is based on the understanding that what the school leader values and models influences the community's perception of the school and how it feels to be a part of the school. The three elements that comprise Domain 5 are drawn from Domain 5 of the prior version of the model and are related to operational responsibilities.

Domain 6, Resource Management, is a new domain that recognizes the important role that resource management plays in both instructional and operational leadership and school improvement. This domain focuses on how school leaders manage all of the fiscal and physical resource necessities at the school to support optimal student learning, including attention to and compliance with district and federal mandates. John Kotter (2001) has written that *"Management is about coping with complexity. ... Leadership, by contrast, is about coping with change (p. 103)."* It is in this sense that the school leader's resource management duties outlined in Domain 6 contribute to the larger vision of the school in their specific and targeted support of school improvement, instruction and curriculum, continuous improvement, collaboration and care, and core values. The three elements of Domain 6 specifically emphasize this focus on student achievement and school growth.

Overview of Updated Sample Protocols

The Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model employs the same five-point scales (0-4) as the original model, and may be implemented as part of an aligned growth and evaluation system. The model is agnostic in that it is designed may be used in conjunction with any teacher or district leader evaluation system. The updated protocols provide broader evidences with more behaviors identified, so that as the leader uses the model for self-assessment and reflection, the evidences serve as a guide to process.

As with the original model, the focus statements in the protocols are designated at Level 2 on the scale. Providing evidence of the desired effects indicate a score at Level 3. Updated evidences and desired effects are included in the protocols. The example below is the protocol for Domain 1, Element 1. Note that the desired effect is specifically stated for the element beneath the focus statement.

Domain I: A Data-Driven Focus on School Improvement

I (1): The school leader ensures the appropriate use of data to develop critical goals focused on improving student achievement at the school.

Desired Effect: Everyone understands the school's most critical goals for improving student achievement.

Scale Value	Description
Innovating (4)	The school leader ensures adjustments are made or new methods are utilized so that all stakeholders sufficiently understand the critical goals.
Applying (3)	The school leader ensures the appropriate use of data to develop critical goals focused on improving student achievement at the school AND regularly monitors that everyone understands the critical goals for improving student achievement.
Developing (2)	The school leader ensures the appropriate use of data to develop critical goals focused on improving student achievement at the school.
Beginning (1)	The school leader attempts to use appropriate data to develop critical goals focused on improving student achievement at the school, but does not complete the task or is not successful.
Not Using (0)	The school leader does not attempt to use appropriate data to develop critical goals focused on improving student achievement at the school.

Sample Evidences for Element 1 of Domain I

- Published goals focus on a plan for eliminating the achievement gap for each student
- Goals support the vision and mission of the school
- School improvement goals are established as a percentage of students who will score at a proficient or higher level on state assessments or benchmark assessments
- Multiple sources of data are used to develop critical goals
- School-wide achievement goals are posted and discussed regularly at faculty and staff gatherings
- Written goals address the most critical and severe achievement deficiencies
- Written timelines contain specific benchmarks for each goal including who provides support for achieving the goal
- A school improvement or strategic plan delineates the critical goals
- Faculty and staff can explain how goals support and eliminate differences in achievement for students at different socioeconomic levels, English learners, and students with disabilities
- Faculty and staff can describe why the identified school-wide achievement goals are the most critical
- Data are available to identify how the most critical achievement goals of the school are supported

The Role of the Evaluator

A district leader evaluating a school leader on Domain 1, Element 1 behaviors would turn to the sample evidences for that element (or additional evidences devised by the district) to gauge the success of the initiative. The evaluator might ask, for example: Are schoolwide achievement goals posted and discussed regularly at faculty meetings? Can faculty and staff explain how goals support eliminating differences in achievement for each student subgroup? Can faculty and staff identify the most critical achievement goals of the school?

As in the original model, each component of the updated model has been designed to meet three objectives: to develop school leader capacity; to ensure fair, accurate, and reliable evaluation of school leaders; and to improve teachers, because teachers are a leading indicator of principal effectiveness.

Procedures for Scoring

Scoring procedures remain the same as in the original Marzano School Leader Evaluation Model.

The scales of the model represent a continuum of behaviors for each of the model's 21 elements. For seamless alignment, the Marzano teacher, non-classroom, and district leader evaluation models employ the same scale structure.

As we see in the sample scale above, the scale for Domain 1, Element 1 ranges from 0 (Not Using) to 4 (Innovating).

A score of 0 (Not Using) indicates that the school leader *does not attempt* to use the strategy or demonstrate the behavior—in this case, the school leader makes no attempt to use data to make decisions related to school improvement.

A score of 1 (Beginning) indicates that the school leader attempts to use the strategy or tries to demonstrate the behavior but *does so only partially or with errors*. For example, the school leader may have put in place a system for collecting and analyzing data but has not yet used that data to develop critical goals focused on improving student achievement.

A score of 2 (Developing) indicates that the school leader accurately displays all the behaviors called for in the element (recall that this is the level of the Focus Statement). This score indicates that the leader is in the compliance stage, consciously completing all the constructs required in the element but stopping there and not moving beyond. Here it is important for the evaluator to develop a plan with the school leader to move to Level 3 (Applying).

A score of 3 (Applying) indicates that the school leader has reached the target or proficiency level. This is the most critical level of the scale progression. A school leader at Applying incorporates all of the behaviors of the Developing level, with an important addition. At Applying, the school leader begins the process of analyzing whether the strategy is achieving the element's desired effect: In Domain 1, Element 1, for example, do the staff and faculty in the school understand the school's most critical goals for improving student achievement? And how is the school leader regularly monitoring this understanding with all staff?

A score of 4 (Innovating) indicates that the school leader not only achieves the desired effect with those impacted by the element, but additionally, in order to achieve a score of Innovating, the school leader may need to change, modify, or adapt the current strategy. In Domain 1, Element 1, we see that a score of Innovating means that the school leader ensures *adjustments are made or new methods are utilized* so that all stakeholders sufficiently understand the critical goals. The language in the scale indicates flexibility and a willingness to try new strategies to continue to attempt to reach all faculty, communicate student achievement goals, and promote understanding.

The scale can serve as a self-assessment for the school leader as well as an evaluative measure for the evaluator. It establishes a common language of growth and evaluation and straightforward description of behaviors, actions, and goals that allows everyone within the system to understand exactly what is meant at each level of the scale.

Using Evidence for Scoring

As with the original model, scoring is based on evidence, making it an objective model and facilitating inter-rater reliability if the school leader has multiple evaluators giving input to inform the evaluation. Evidence may be obtained from multiple sources including observation, conferencing, or artifacts. Artifactual evidence is a critical component of this model, as it facilitates the school leader's ongoing use of survey data, formative student data, and other evidence to substantiate that

the leader's actions are achieving the desired effect. The updated model includes expanded sample evidences for each element; these may be supplemented with additional evidences devised by the district. It is important to note that the sample evidences are in no way intended to be used as a checklist. Rather, the observer uses the evidences to provide efficient and accurate feedback.

Review of Leadership Studies

In addition to the extensive research base detailed on pages 17 and 18, two recent reports have supported the validity of the Marzano School Leader Evaluation Model. The 2017 RAND Report, *School Leadership Interventions Under the Every Student Succeeds Act: Evidence Review*, identified the Marzano School Leader Evaluation Model as one of only two leader evaluation models that meet the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) criteria for evidence-based leader evaluation systems.

Additionally, a 2016 Mid-Atlantic REL study, *Measuring principals' effectiveness: Results from New Jersey's first year of statewide principal evaluation* from the Mathematics Policy Research Institute, also reported on the effectiveness of the model based on first-year implementation data of 212 principals in 209 schools. One of the study's conclusions was that principal ratings with the model and median student growth percentiles had moderate to high year-to-year stability.

As noted above, one of the significant updates to the model is addressed in Domain 6, Resource Management. Research on how a school leader's operational capabilities and resource management practices impact student achievement or school growth is still somewhat scarce. But a 2009 Stanford University study conducted on Miami-Dade Public Schools concluded that:

... time spent on Organization Management activities is associated with positive school outcomes, such as student test score gains and positive teacher and parent assessments of the instructional climate; whereas Day-to-Day Instruction activities are marginally or not at all related to improvements in student performance and often have a negative relationship with teacher and parent assessments. This paper suggests that a single-minded focus on principals as instructional leaders operationalized through direct contact with teachers may be detrimental if it forsakes the important role of principals as organizational leaders (p. iv).

Additionally, some researchers have made a distinction between *management* and *leadership* that may be useful here. School leaders must be leaders not managers, even when designing and executing operational systems. Citing 2011 research by Shamas-ur-Reman Toor in the engineering field, Stein (2013) in the *Journal of Leadership Education* notes three significant themes that emerge in thinking about the difference between leadership and management:

In his extensive research on the differences between managers and leaders, Toor (2011) concluded that there are three significant themes: “First, leadership pursues change that is coupled with sustainability, while management endeavors to maintain order that is tied with the bottom line. Second, leadership exercises personal power and relational influence to gain authority, whereas management banks on position power and structural hierarchy to execute orders. Third, leadership empowers people, whereas management imposes authority” (p. 318). It is no coincidence, therefore, that America’s highest performing schools are the products of good leadership as opposed to effective management (p. 23).

In this vein, the authors of the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model have conceptualized school management of resources and operations as evidence of effective operational leadership.

The Research Base of the Marzano School Leader Evaluation Model

In *School Leadership for Results*, we outlined the research supporting the Marzano School Leader Evaluation Model, which was drawn from four primary documents.

The conceptual framework for the model is based on historical and contemporary research. We also drew on recent public policy initiatives to formulate and refine our theoretical perspective and recommendations. The research draws from four primary documents related to school leadership:

- (1) The multi-year Wallace Study conducted and published jointly by the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) at the University of Minnesota and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010);
- (2) The 2011 study of *What Works in Oklahoma Schools* (Marzano Research Laboratory, 2011) conducted by Marzano Research Laboratory with the Oklahoma State Department of Education over the 2009-2010 and the 2010-2011 school years;
- (3) The Marzano, Waters, and McNulty meta-analysis of school leadership published in 2005 in *School Leadership that Works*; and
- (4) The Marzano study of school effectiveness published in 2003 in *What Works in Schools*.

The report funded by the Wallace Foundation, *Learning from Leadership: Investigating the Links to Improved Student Learning*, stands as the seminal examination of the relationship between school leader actions and behaviors and student academic achievement. The report confirmed through quantitative data that effective school leadership is linked to student achievement. It concluded that principals play the central role in leadership, while *collective leadership* shared between teachers, parents, and other stakeholders plays a contributing part. Researchers found that, for example, “Leadership practices targeted directly at improving instruction (i.e., instructional leadership) have significant, effects on teachers’ working relationships and, indirectly, on student achievement (p. 37).”

The authors further noted that “Leadership effects on student learning occur largely because leadership strengthens professional community... professional community, in turn, fosters the use of instructional practices that are associated with student achievement (p. 37).” They added that the professional community effect may reflect the creation of a supportive school climate that encourages student effort above and beyond that provided in individual classrooms. The report confirmed that school leaders have a profound impact on school culture and that a culture focused on student learning will yield results in improved student performance.

The study of *What Works in Oklahoma Schools* conducted by Marzano Research Laboratory (2010) for the Oklahoma State Department of Education also indicated that specific actions on the part of administrators are statistically related to student academic achievement. In addition, Marzano, Waters, and McNulty’s Meta-Analysis of School Leadership, published in *School Leadership that Works* (Marzano et al., 2005), which examined the research literature from 1978 to 2001, also found that school leadership has a statistically significant relationship with student achievement. Such leadership can be explained as 21 responsibilities of effective school leaders. As the school leader evaluation model developed, these 21 responsibilities were redefined as specific actions and subsequently became the original model’s elements.

Finally, the Marzano study of effective schools published in *What Works in Schools* (Marzano, 2003), specified 11 factors that schools must attend to if they are to enhance student achievement and the school leadership implications regarding those 11 factors. The Marzano School Leader Evaluation Model was developed based on these key findings, what we believe are best practices within the profession.

Conclusion

New research and practice necessitates that evaluation models undergo regular examination and revision to maintain alignment to best practices in the education field. Updating a growth and evaluation model requires a delicate balance. The model must identify the essential behaviors required, define clear measurement standards, and perhaps most critically, the model must be built to support feedback and growth objectives. We believe the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model is complex enough to provide specificity and objectivity, yet streamlined enough to support ease of adoption and use. Our objective in this model update was to provide a set of criteria to help school leaders reflect on and improve their practice while remaining true to our vision of which leadership qualities are most likely to impact whole school improvement and student achievement.

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