

T&L/ETWD/Educator Development

Principles for Principals August 2026

August Topic: Launching the Year with Purpose (Mission, Vision, & Goal Setting)

Overview

Great Schools Begin with Clear Goals, Not Just Good Intentions

As a first-year principal, August can feel like a race to solve problems. Schedules need adjusting, buses arrive late, classroom teachers need support, and unexpected challenges appear every day. While these responsibilities demand your attention, they should not distract you from your most important work.

One of your greatest responsibilities this month is ensuring that everyone in your school understands the school goals, why they matter, and how they will be measured.

The [Louisiana Leader Rubric](#) reminds us that effective school leaders do more than establish a vision. They translate that vision into rigorous, data-driven goals, communicate those goals clearly, and continually monitor progress with teachers throughout the school year. August is when those systems begin.

As you begin the year, ask yourself:

- Have we established clear, measurable goals for student learning?
- Does every teacher understand how our school goals connect to daily instruction?
- What evidence will tell us we are making progress?
- How will teachers regularly analyze student data and student work?
- Have I communicated our mission, vision, and goals so consistently that every stakeholder can describe them?

Vision sets the direction. Goals drive the work.

A compelling vision inspires people. Clear goals focus people. The strongest principals intentionally connect the two. They communicate a vision that everyone believes in while establishing measurable goals that guide daily decisions.

Teachers should never wonder:

- What are we trying to accomplish?
- How will we measure success?
- What should we do when students are not yet meeting expectations?

When those answers are clear, teachers can focus their energy on improving instruction rather than guessing at priorities.

August Leadership Question

How will I ensure that every stakeholder understands our school goals, uses student data to guide instruction, and knows how we will monitor progress together throughout the year?

Leadership in Action

Provide guidance and support to ensure instruction is aligned to:

- Your school's mission
- Your school's vision
- The measurable goals your school is pursuing this year
- Why these goals are important

Build a data-driven team early in the school year and meet together to

- Examine beginning-of-the-year data
- Identify strengths and areas of need
- Establish grade-level and department priorities
- Determine how progress will be monitored.

Develop routines for Instructional Leadership Teams (ILT's) and Teacher Collaborations (TCs):

- Intentional classroom learning walks that inform ILTs
- Teacher Collaborations
- Review student work
- Planning with high-quality instructional materials (HQIM)
- Implementing and monitoring student interventions
- Progress monitoring

Leadership Reflection

Before meeting with your mentor, reflect on:

- What are my school's most important goals this year?
- How will teachers know whether we are making progress?
- What systems have I established for reviewing student progress?
- How well have I communicated our mission, vision, and goals to all stakeholders?

Leadership is not measured by how smoothly the school opens. It is measured by whether the systems you establish in August lead to improved outcomes for students throughout the school year.

Mentor Spotlight



Sara Taylor
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Lessons learned from my first year as a principal

- One mistake I made during my first year as a principal was trying to carry the full weight of the work, emotions, and responsibilities on my own. I felt a strong sense of responsibility to solve every problem, support every staff member, and meet everyone's expectations. Over time, I realized that this approach was not sustainable and prevented others from using their strengths. The most effective leaders do not carry the load alone; they build strong teams, delegate responsibilities, and trust others to contribute to the success of the school
- The decision that changed my year was intentionally building leadership capacity within my team. Rather than being the sole decision-maker, I began providing opportunities for teachers and staff to take on leadership roles, share ideas, and help drive school improvement efforts. This created a stronger sense of ownership across the building and fostered collaboration among staff. As a

result, we became more effective as a school because leadership was shared, and our collective impact on students was much greater.

- One leadership habit I continue to practice is asking myself, "Is this what is best for children?" before making any significant decision. Whether I am addressing challenges, allocating resources, developing schedules, or considering new initiatives, that question helps keep my focus on our core purpose. It serves as a guide when competing priorities arise and reminds me that every decision should ultimately support student learning, well-being, and success. Keeping students at the center of the work has helped me lead with clarity and purpose.
- My advice to every first-year principal is to lean on your team and remember that you do not have to be a superhero. Surround yourself with trusted staff members, seek input from others, and know that asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness. There will be times when you must make difficult decisions that are not universally popular, and that is part of the role. If your decisions are grounded in what is best for children and ensure they are safe, happy, healthy, and receiving high-quality instruction every day, you can move forward with confidence knowing you are leading with integrity and purpose.

Mentor's Coaching Guide

This month's **coaching purpose** is to help the novice principal understand that effective leadership begins with a clear vision and is sustained through intentional planning and continuous improvement. The school's mission, vision, goals, and action steps should not exist as separate documents. They should guide every leadership decision made throughout the year.

Likewise, the principal's own leadership refinement goal should support the school's work. As the principal grows, the school grows.

Suggestions for questions to guide your monthly meeting discussions:

Connect to School Goals

- How were your school goals developed, and how do they reflect the needs of your students and community?
- Where are your school's mission, vision, goals, and action steps documented? How are they communicated and revisited throughout the year?
- How do your daily leadership actions reinforce your school's strategic plan?

Connect to the Louisiana Leader Rubric

- Which Louisiana Leader Rubric indicator best reflects a current strength in your leadership?
- Which indicator would you like to intentionally strengthen this year?
- Why did you select that indicator, and what evidence tells you it is an area for growth?

Develop an Action Plan

- What is one refinement goal you will focus on this semester?
- How does that refinement goal support your school's mission, vision, or improvement goals?
- What specific leadership actions will you take during the next month?
- What evidence will demonstrate that you are making progress?

For questions or comments, please contact LouisianaLeaders@la.gov.