LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

T&L/ETWD/Educator Development

Principles for Principals November 2026

November Topic: The Principal Should Never Be the Only Instructional Leader (Building Capacity)

Overview

Leadership is not about carrying more. It is about building the people who can lead that system with you.

Over the past two months, *Principles for Principals* has focused on strengthening your role as an instructional leader. You have considered how classroom observations provide evidence about teaching and learning and how that evidence moves through your Instructional Leadership Team, Teacher Collaboration, professional learning, coaching, and back into classrooms.

But a strong instructional system cannot depend on the principal alone.

The Louisiana Leader Rubric (LLR) calls leaders to develop reflective practices, leadership pipelines, collaborative structures, and continuous professional improvement.

Effective principals intentionally develop the people around them to take increasing ownership for improving teaching and learning. They recognize their team members' strengths, create meaningful opportunities for others to lead, provide support and feedback as leadership capacity develops, and set clear expectations for shared responsibility.

Building capacity is more than delegating tasks. Delegation asks someone to complete a task. Capacity building develops someone's ability to take the lead.

That shift requires trust, but it also requires clarity and accountability. As others take on greater leadership responsibility, principals must communicate expectations, navigate resistance, address concerns early, recognize contributions, and engage in difficult conversations when necessary.

Ask yourself:

- Who currently shares responsibility for instructional leadership in my school?
- Whose leadership potential have I not yet fully developed?
- Where does my team still depend too heavily on me?
- Am I giving others tasks to complete or meaningful opportunities to lead?
- How am I supporting people when leadership becomes challenging?

Strong principals do not create followers. They develop people who can lead the work alongside them.

November Leadership Question

How do I develop the people around me to share responsibility for improving teaching and learning across our school?

Leadership in Action

Identify and develop leadership capacity across your school by

- recognizing the strengths, expertise, and leadership potential of School Instructional Leadership Team (S-ILT) members and other staff,
- identifying areas where the team depends too heavily on the principal,
- matching leadership opportunities to individual strengths and areas for growth,
- creating opportunities for others to lead instructional work and contribute to decisions, and
- providing coaching, modeling, feedback, and support as emerging leaders assume greater responsibility.

Create shared ownership for instructional improvement by

- establishing clear roles and responsibilities within the S-ILT;
- engaging team members in analyzing classroom evidence and student learning,
- empowering others to facilitate S-ILT meetings, Teacher Collaborations (TC), or professional learning,
- giving team members ownership of instructional priorities, not simply tasks to complete, and
- establishing clear expectations for follow-through and evidence of impact.

Lead people through challenge while maintaining trust and accountability by

- addressing concerns early with clarity, professionalism, and a solutions-focused approach,
- engaging in difficult conversations that promote reflection, growth, and shared understanding,
- navigating resistance with curiosity, composure, and a focus on the shared goal,
- recognizing staff contributions and celebrating growth,
- balancing empathy and support with clear expectations and accountability; and
- following up consistently on commitments and next steps.

Principal →Develops Leaders →Leaders Build Teacher Capacity →Teachers Strengthen Practice→ Students Learn

Leadership capacity multiplies instructional impact.

Leadership Reflection

Before meeting with your mentor, reflect on the following questions:

- Where am I still carrying instructional leadership work that someone else could be developing the capacity to lead?
- Who on my team is ready for greater leadership responsibility, and what opportunity could I provide?
- Am I delegating tasks or developing leaders?
- How am I leading through challenges and change?
- What evidence would tell me that leadership capacity is growing across my school?

Mentor Spotlight



Dr. Lakesha Reese-Penn
East Baton Rouge Parish Schools

Recognizing Leadership Potential

I recognized leadership potential in a third-grade math teacher with strong content knowledge and a genuine commitment to student success. When students struggled, he often internalized the results, and our coaching conversations helped him shift his focus toward examining instructional practice and how students were engaging with the content. What stood out most was his willingness to be coached, reflect on his practice, and grow. I saw an opportunity to help him channel that commitment and expertise beyond his own classroom and begin developing his capacity as an instructional leader.

Creating Opportunities to Lead

I appointed him as the 3–5 Math Department Chair, giving him responsibility for bringing teachers across grade levels together to strengthen vertical and horizontal alignment of math instruction. Although initially hesitant about taking on the role, he was excited by the opportunity and the trust placed in him. I continued to provide coaching and encouragement while giving him space to make decisions and grow into the role. Over time, he began taking greater initiative, supporting colleagues, and assuming additional leadership responsibilities without being asked. As his confidence and capacity grew, I expanded his opportunities to lead and challenged him to begin developing leadership in others.

Learning to Let Others Lead

This experience reinforced for me that developing leaders requires more than giving someone responsibility; it also means providing the coaching and feedback needed to strengthen their leadership practice. One area we focused on was communication. He had strong content knowledge and valuable ideas, and I coached him on how to communicate those ideas with greater clarity and conciseness. We often discussed how less can be more and the importance of presenting information in a way that others can readily understand and act upon. As I gave him more room to lead, I learned that sharing leadership does not mean stepping away; it means knowing when to coach, when to provide feedback, and when to step back and let someone grow through the experience.

Advice for First-Year Principals

Building a strong instructional leadership team starts with recognizing people's potential and being willing to invest in their growth. Once you give someone a meaningful opportunity to lead, be clear about the expectations, provide coaching and feedback, and give them the space to make decisions and grow into the role. As their confidence and capacity develop, so does your ability to share responsibility while maintaining accountability for the work. Most importantly, trust people enough to lead without feeling that you have to lead for them.

Mentor's Coaching Guide

This month's coaching purpose is to help the novice principal move from personally leading the instructional work to intentionally developing others to lead alongside them.

Support the novice principal in examining the strengths, responsibilities, and leadership potential of the people around them. Help them identify where instructional leadership is shared effectively and where the school remains overly dependent on the principal.

Building leadership capacity does not mean giving away responsibility. The principal remains accountable for the quality of teaching and learning while creating opportunities for others to develop the knowledge, skills, confidence, and ownership necessary to lead improvement.

Mentors should also help novice principals recognize that developing others will sometimes require challenging conversations. Effective leaders maintain trust by combining clarity, support, empathy, and accountability.

Suggestions for questions to guide your monthly meeting discussions:
Examine Your S-ILT

- Who currently shares responsibility for instructional leadership?
- What strengths does each S-ILT member bring to the team?
- Who has leadership potential that could be developed further?
- Who could take greater ownership of an instructional priority?

Move from Delegating to Developing

- What are you currently doing that someone else could learn to lead?
- What meaningful leadership opportunity could you provide that person?
- What support will they need before taking responsibility?
- How will you know that this person's leadership capacity is growing?

Lead Through Challenge

- Where are you experiencing resistance or lack of follow-through?
- What is the real issue?
- What do you know, and what might you be assuming?
- What expectation needs to be clarified?
- How can you balance empathy with accountability?
- Is there a conversation you are avoiding that could help this person grow?

Suggested Action Step for Mentor/Mentee School Visits:
Identify One Leader to Develop
Together, identify one person whose instructional leadership capacity the novice principal will intentionally develop during the next month.

Determine:

- One Leadership Opportunity: What meaningful responsibility will this person own?
- One Support: What coaching, modeling, resources, or feedback will the principal provide?
- One Expectation: What does successful leadership of this responsibility look like?
- One Evidence Source: What will demonstrate that both the individual and the work are progressing?

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