



T&L/ETWD/Educator Development

Principles for Principals October 2026

October Topic: Turning Classroom Evidence into Instructional Improvement:
Building a Coherent System for Teaching and Learning

Overview

Observation is the beginning, not the end, of Instructional Leadership.

In September, we challenged you to spend time where your school's most important work happens: in classrooms. You used learning walks and observations to better understand what teachers are teaching, what students are experiencing, and where strengths and instructional needs exist across your school.

But seeing instruction is only the beginning.

Effective instructional leaders create systems that turn what they learn in classrooms into focused action, professional learning, teacher collaboration, coaching, and ultimately stronger instruction for students.

The **Louisiana Professional Learning Roadmap** describes this as a coherent system for instructional improvement, one in which priorities, structures, and practices are aligned from leadership decisions to classroom instruction. The **Louisiana Leader Rubric (LLR)** guides the leadership actions within that system, while the Louisiana Educator Rubric provides common expectations for effective instructional practice.

For the principal, this means connecting work that can easily become disconnected:

School Goals → Classroom Evidence → Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) → Teacher Collaboration (TC) → Classroom Practice → Evidence of Impact

Your ILT is central to making those connections. The ILT uses student data, observation evidence, teacher input, and school priorities to identify instructional needs and determine the professional learning, coaching, collaboration, and support teachers need. Those supports then move into TC and ultimately into classroom practice.

Then leaders return to classrooms. The question is no longer simply, "What did I see?" It becomes: "What are we changing in our school to strengthen instruction and improve student learning?"

Coherence happens when what leaders see, what teachers do, and what students experience and learn are connected.

October Leadership Question

How do I turn what I am learning from classrooms into a coherent system that strengthens teaching and improves student learning?

Leadership in Action

Bring classroom evidence to your ILT to

- examine trends from learning walks, observations, student work, and other relevant data;
- connect those trends to your school's instructional goals and priorities;
- identify strengths in instructional practice that should be reinforced;
- determine one or two high-leverage instructional needs requiring deeper support; and
- distinguish between individual teacher needs and patterns that require school-wide action.

Turn identified needs into intentional professional learning and support by

- establishing a clear instructional focus;
- determining what teachers need to learn, plan, practice, and implement;
- aligning Teacher Collaboration to the identified instructional priority;
- using HQIM as the foundation for instructional planning and learning;
- providing coaching, modeling, exemplars, rehearsal, and feedback as needed; and
- protecting time for ILT, TC, coaching, observation, and feedback.

Return to classrooms to assess impact and refine support by

- looking for evidence that agreed-upon instructional practices are being implemented;
- examining whether teacher practice is changing;
- analyzing student work and evidence of student learning;
- bringing new evidence back to the ILT;
- determining whether support should continue, deepen, or change; and
- beginning the next cycle based on what the evidence reveals.

Leadership Reflection

Before meeting with your mentor, reflect on:

- What instructional trends are emerging from my classroom observations and student evidence?
- Does my ILT spend more time discussing information or making instructional decisions?
- Can I clearly trace one current school instructional priority from school goal →ILT →TC → classroom practice?
- Are teachers receiving the learning, practice, coaching, and feedback they need to implement our instructional priorities?
- When we return to classrooms, what evidence will tell us that our support is making a difference for teachers and students?

Mentor Spotlight



Kalandra Loyd
Vidalia Lower Elementary
Concordia Parish Schools

Lessons learned from my first year as a principal

- One mistake I made as a first-year principal was that I prided myself on building relationships, ensuring faculty was seen, valued, and heard, but I failed to have difficult conversations when necessary. As a first year principal, "Placing Bandages" in situations ensures compliance issues long term. So embrace difficult moments, have private conversations when necessary, and align

every conversation with the school's mission, vision, and yearly goals to positively impact the school's culture and climate.

- A decision that changed my school year and ensured long-term success was building a strong instructional leadership team. My assistant principal and I reviewed teacher evaluations, learning walk data, students' learning target data, and teachers' professionalism when dealing with students, staff, parents, and community friends, and chose strategically based on those look-fors and high performance expectations. This team goes the extra mile to build their capacity in Tier 1 curricula, loves learning, and has altered the trajectory of our school growth goals and teacher efficacy because of their willingness to "Go First" in the learning. This ILT prioritizes the needs of our teachers and students based on data analysis and holds integrity dear and near to their hearts when making impactful instructional decisions.
- A leadership practice that will forever be golden is remaining a collaborative thought partner with my amazing school family I serve. It is imperative to Lead, Learn, and VIBE in order to carry out the mission, vision, and school goals for student achievement. Leadership is not about making everything fit to your liking, but it is about embracing every moment and leaving a little sparkle as you evolve and elevate your school's academic performance in order to make exceptional gains.
- My advice to every first-year principal is to remember to be an encourager in your school building; see the trees despite the forest! As a first-year principal, be consistent, collaborative, and committed to making a difference daily.

Mentor's Coaching Guide

This month's coaching purpose is to help the novice principal move from observing instruction to leading a coherent system of instructional improvement.

Support the novice principal in examining how classroom evidence moves through the school's instructional structures. Help them determine whether the work of the ILT, Teacher Collaboration, professional learning, coaching, and classroom observations is aligned around a small number of meaningful instructional priorities.

The goal is not simply to have each structure in place. The goal is for the structures to work together to improve what teachers do and what students experience.

Suggestions for questions to guide your monthly meeting discussions:

Examine the Instructional System

- Walk me through what happens when your learning walks reveal a school-wide instructional need.
- Who sees and analyzes that evidence?
- How does your ILT decide what needs attention?
- How does that decision influence Teacher Collaboration?
- What opportunities do teachers have to learn, practice, receive feedback, and refine their practice?
- How do you know whether that learning transfers into classrooms?

Examine the Instructional Leadership Team

- What is the current instructional focus of your ILT?
- How does it connect to your school goals?
- What evidence led your team to this priority?
- Is your ILT agenda primarily operational, or is the majority of your time focused on teaching and learning?

- What decisions has your ILT made recently that changed what teachers or students experience?
- How are responsibilities, timelines, and follow-up communicated?

Suggested Action Step for Mentor/Mentee School Visits:

Attend or review one ILT meeting together. Select one instructional priority and examine how the team is using classroom and student evidence to determine teacher learning and support. Then conduct classroom learning walks together to look for evidence of implementation and impact.

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