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INTRODUCTION

The Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model, 2018 Update

A 2017 Rand report, *School Leadership Interventions Under the Every Student Succeeds Act: Evidence Review* (Herman et al., 2017), identified the Marzano School Leader Evaluation Model as one of only two leader evaluation models that meet ESSA criteria for evidence-based leader evaluation systems.

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 (Herman & Ross, 2016), 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.

Introduced in 2018, the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model is an update to the original Marzano School Leader Evaluation Model, drawing on lessons learned, current research, and new standards. Refined over five years, the Focused Model is designed to support school leaders to continuously improve their practice, concentrating on focused, research-based elements correlated to school improvement and restoring the right balance between instructional and organizational leadership. The model was designed as a framework to break down large domains of responsibility into individual elements in order to guide professional practice and help leaders self-assess and improve. 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. The 2018 Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model is complex enough to provide specificity and objectivity, yet streamlined enough to support ease of adoption and use.

This conceptual framework undergirds both the Focused Model and the

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premise of this book. The Focused Model supports improved performance and professional growth; thus, evaluation becomes the measurement of the school leader's progress toward specific growth goals and the desired effects of each element. If a school leader wants to find the silver bullet to grow his or her practice and achieve sustained results in student achievement, the Focused Model serves as a roadmap.

> "I have used the model as a roadmap to reflect on my practice, going through each domain and then figuring out how to use my reflection to identify areas where I want to get better. For me, it is a mindset type of thing—this is my blueprint and my path and it helps me identify an area where I can grow. The model also gives me concrete examples. You can look at the evidences and see yourself in those, and you take that and look at the scale to ask yourself: Am I just really implementing, or am I implementing and also monitoring for the desired effect?"
>
> —Lori Connery, PhD, Principal, Norman, OK

Dr. Robert Marzano and Dr. Beverly Carbaugh developed and field-tested the original Marzano School Leader Evaluation Model over a period of several years and have updated the objectives in the new Focused Model.

Key Objectives of the 2018 Updated Focused Marzano School Leader Evaluation Model

- To recognize the responsibility of the school leader to find balance and synergy between instructional and organizational leadership
- To recognize the importance of supporting diversity, inclusiveness, and equal opportunity for each student
- To clearly define the role of the school leader in keeping the school focused on its core values
- To support a caring and collaborative culture where all stakeholders embrace a growth mindset
- To keep a constant focus on results

Challenges for Designing School Leader Evaluation

As we noted in 2015, although a great deal of research has been compiled on school leader effectiveness over the past several decades, the research on school leader *evaluation* has been "surprisingly thin" as indicated by a review of the literature conducted in 2011. Davis, Kearney, Sanders, Thomas, and Leon published a comprehensive review of the existing literature on school leader evaluation that identified the challenges most districts were facing as

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they began to implement new evaluation systems as required by Race to the Top. The report summarized the research from 1980 to 2010. From a total of sixty-eight publications, the authors drew a number of important conclusions about school leader evaluation and the requirements around implementing new evaluation systems.

Davis et al. (2011) went on to identify the most common recommendations and suggestions for reforming principal evaluation. Among their findings were the following:

- Evaluation should guide professional development.
- Evaluation criteria and standards should be clear and should align with school and district goals and student outcomes.
- Principals should collaborate in their evaluation goals, planning, and assessment.
- The tools should be reliable and valid.
- The evaluation system should be built on a foundation of research on effective school leadership and organizations.
- A balance of formative and summative functions would best ensure school leader buy-in and collaboration.
- Evaluations conducted by multiple stakeholders, and drawing on multiple measures, appear to be most effective (pp. 33–35).

The 2018 Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model is correlated with all these criteria, as we will discuss in some detail as we delve into the six domains and twenty-one elements in the ensuing chapters of this book.

The Instructional/Organizational Leader

We have updated the objectives of the 2018 Focused Model *to balance a dual focus on instructional and organizational 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 organizational leadership. Multiple factors create this balance and interplay, and the updated Focused Model recognizes those factors and their importance.

We will discuss the specifics of the domains, elements, desired effects, and the sample evidences in some detail below. But before our discussion of the specific domains, it's important to understand what we mean by *instructional leadership* and *organizational leadership* and how these two leadership capacities are interdependent and critical to the successful functioning of the school.

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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. Because the literature on instructional leadership does not always define instructional leadership consistently, our own definition of *instructional leadership* has continued to evolve under the impetus of new research. The updated elements in the Focused Model reflect this evolution. 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).

The school leader's involvement may take many forms, including leading and supporting teacher learning teams and motivating teachers to continue to grow and provide the most effective classroom environments for each student. The instructional leader identifies effective instructional practices and provides rich classroom observation feedback. He or she organizes professional development opportunities, supports the concept of standards-based instruction, and ensures equal learning opportunities for each student. In these capacities, the instructional leader is highly visible and accessible, distributing necessary resources and clearing distractions so that everyone in the school can focus on what matters most: student learning.

Organizational leadership is how the leader organizes and operates all aspects of the functioning of the school: culture, climate, safety, and budget.

It's not much of a stretch to see how instructional leadership is intimately connected to organizational leadership. For example, Standard 9 (Operations and Management) of the PSEL 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 organizational leadership would directly impact instruction and the conditions for student learning.

Research on how a school leader's organizational 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:

> 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

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> 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* [our italics]. (Horng, 2009, 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 organizational 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. (Stein, 2016, p. 23)

In this vein, the authors of the 2018 Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model have conceptualized school management of resources and operations as part of the evidence of effective organizational leadership, the emphasis of the new Domain 6.

The Focused School Leader Evaluation Model has also been updated to make these connections between instructional and organizational leadership explicit and to balance these interconnected responsibilities. As with the original model, the 2018 model has an accompanying protocol that explains the element and provides sample evidences. The updated model's protocols have been revised to include a specific desired effect for each element and an increased number of sample evidences. The Focused Model is aligned to the 2015 PSEL, discussed below (for a crosswalk between the model and PSEL, see appendix E).

New Policies for School Leader Evaluation

We published the first edition of *School Leadership for Results* in 2015, just a few months before President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds

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Act (ESSA) on December 10, 2015. ESSA represented a further step in the long evolution of our understanding of effective school leadership. Along with the new PSEL released that same year, ESSA set a high bar for evidence-based initiatives for school improvement. New ESSA guidelines have shifted the burden and the freedom to develop and sustain evaluation systems back to the states. At the same time, they emphasize research- and evidence-based systems for improving school leader performance, through training, evaluation systems, and preparation. A 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 ESSA criteria for evidence-based leader evaluation systems.

A Wallace report notes that ESSA evidence on the positive effects of school leadership activities include principal evaluation, principal preparation, academies, professional learning, working conditions, and school improvement models (The Wallace Foundation, 2016). School leader evaluation has a large role to play in developing effective school leadership, for evaluation models are, at best, tools to frame leadership responsibilities, to measure leader performance, and to guide and support focused professional development.

Updated Professional Standards for School Leaders

Researchers have taken a growing interest in not only what fosters and constitutes principal effectiveness but also what constitutes best design and implementation of effective principal evaluation systems. The most prudent school leader growth and evaluation models should align with the ten PSEL standards released by the National Board for Education Administration in 2015:

Standard 1. Mission, Vision, and Core Values

Standard 2. Ethics and Professional Norms

Standard 3. Equity and Cultural Responsiveness

Standard 4. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Standard 5. Community of Care and Support for Students

Standard 6. Professional Capacity of School Personnel

Standard 7. Professional Community for Teachers and Staff

Standard 8. Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community

Standard 9. Operations and Management

Standard 10. School Improvement

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