

UNDERSTANDING

Ontario's Institute for Education Leadership

The concept for Ontario's Institute for Education Leadership (IEL) was first introduced in a ministry discussion paper, *Leading Education: New Supports for Principals and Vice-principals in Ontario Publicly Funded Schools* in December 2005. The Institute for Education Leadership was described as a virtual organization that would build on the efforts of principals' associations and school boards in developing a framework to support school leaders

in professional learning, provide opportunities for research and knowledge sharing, and ensure overall coordination of leadership initiatives. Since its inaugural meeting on February 14th, 2006, the IEL has made significant progress in embracing its purpose and modeling tri-level leadership. It has established an effective committee structure, a set of guiding principles, key goals and a series of action steps to address these interconnected goals.

PURPOSE

The IEL brings together representatives from the principals' associations, the supervisory officers' associations, the Council of Directors of Education and the Ministry of Education to work in collaborative partnership and model high calibre tri-level, strategic leadership. The main goal is to assist school and system leaders in maximizing the achievements of all students. The emphasis is on listening, learning and moving forward together. This has created a deeper understanding of the urgent necessity of a more coherent, connected and coordinated approach to the integration of knowledge, research, policy and practice in education.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The IEL Steering Committee comprised of representatives from the various provincial leadership associations and personnel from the Ministry's Leadership Development Branch as well as the Student Achievement Branch meet on a monthly basis during the school year. There are also four subcommittees: research advisory, implementation, communication and a Francophone advisory committee that meet regularly. The IEL's guiding principles include operating on a consensus model of decision-making, recognizing the need to be responsive to each of the four sectors of public education, seeking expert advice from multiple sources, and evaluating and reporting annually on its activities.

KEY GOALS

The IEL has articulated four key goals: development, research, practice and communication. Development includes defining leadership, identifying the necessary skills and competencies and "staying on the leading edge of leadership knowledge." The IEL supports research on effective leadership practices both in the Ontario context and internationally. By re-examining current practices in response to emerging research, the IEL seeks to align more closely theory and practice. The fourth key goal is communication. A variety of communication tools are used to enhance understanding of educational leadership and to promote dialogue, inquiry and disseminate meaningful information in a timely, comprehensive and coherent manner within the educational community and in the larger community.

ACTION STEPS

In working towards achieving these goals, the IEL has undertaken a number of action steps that have had an impact on education leaders in Ontario. Some significant actions include:

- ensuring that the Ontario leadership frameworks for principals, vice-principals and supervisory officers reflect the emerging

- needs of the four sectors of public education;
- supporting effective implementation through the development of a workshop on the *Leadership Framework*, which was delivered to all school boards in Ontario in 2008-09;
- commissioning The Learning Partnership to complete a comprehensive research study on succession planning and talent development in Ontario school boards;
- sponsoring three distinct international action research projects involving provincial teams of directors, superintendents, principals and vice-principals; *Netherlands 2006, Australia 2007 and Belgium 2008*;
- establishing an annual provincial orientation program for newly appointed supervisory officers that illustrates tri-level leadership and the leadership frameworks;
- sponsoring a research project on the role of *The Director as Instructional Leader* for the Southwest Ontario directors that is being led by Dr. Ken Leithwood;
- commissioning a research project on effective practices in succession planning and talent development in Ontario boards with a view to creating an online resource for the IEL website; and
- strengthening the IEL's understanding of leading edge leadership learning through the participation of representatives in Harvard's Executive Course: *The Art and Practice of Leadership*.

NEXT STEPS

In the coming year the Institute for Education Leadership will focus on supporting boards in going deeper in implementing the leadership frameworks. The IEL will also lead the way in assisting boards with creating comprehensive plans for succession planning and talent development that reflect tri-level collaborative leadership with a clear focus on maximizing the achievement of all students. The IEL will continue to work towards ensuring that:

- all partners share a common vision of education leadership for Ontario that respects the diversity of the four sectors of publicly-funded education;
- all stakeholders are clear about the identity and purpose of the IEL;
- all partners within the IEL experience leadership growth at all levels; and
- the IEL is recognized throughout the province as a leader in research and practice related to leadership.

For further information on the Institute for Education Leadership, visit www.education-leadership-ontario.ca.