



Study Guide

Leading School Improvement: A Framework for Action

Joseph Murphy

This study guide is arranged by chapter, enabling readers to work their way through the entire book or to focus on the specific topics addressed in a particular chapter. This guide is designed to help you reflect on and apply the ideas presented in *Leading School Improvement*, and is a useful companion piece for individuals, small groups, or an entire faculty. Learning Sciences International thanks you for your interest in this book, and we hope that this guide proves a valuable addition and support to your professional development practices.

Chapter 1

The Five Intelligences of Leadership

1. Provide an example of each of the five intelligences of leadership.

Banked Intelligence	
Fluid Intelligence	
Connected Intelligence	
Relational Intelligence	
Operational Intelligence	

2. Explain how all five intelligences are interdependent.

Chapter 2

Backstage Roles for School Leaders

1. What does the author mean by “frontstage” and “backstage” understandings of school leadership?
2. According to the text, what is the first law of school improvement?
3. What is meant by the statement, “the primary role of the principal is to rework the deeply entrenched seedbeds in the areas of teaching and learning, and school improvement.”?
4. Explain the two activities necessary for principals to be effective leaders or “gluing agents.”
5. Why is it important for a leader to be a caregiver?

Chapter 3

Three Layers of Leadership

1. What does the author consider the “bedrock” or foundational layer of strong leadership?
2. If the scaffolding is a “set of forged rules,” what does a good principal take into account when implementing school improvement initiatives?
3. Identify the two essential elements of great schools, and explain the key components of each.
4. Give an example of a school improvement initiative that you have implemented, and explain both the successes and failures within the context of the three layers of leadership.

Chapter 4

The Four Defining Characteristics of Highly Effective Leaders

1. Explain what the author means by, “schooling is a human enterprise.”
2. How might passion “push open opportunities that are often unseen in other schools”?
3. Give an example from your own leadership career, in which you persisted through a seemingly insurmountable obstacle, and succeeded to overcome it.
4. Why is hope such an invaluable asset?
5. How is authenticity a central dynamic in effective leadership?

The 5E Model of School Leadership

1. Describe in your own words the five components of the 5E Model of Leadership and give an example of each.

Educational Leadership	
Ethical Leadership	
Empowering Leadership	
Entrepreneurial Leadership	
Environmental Leadership	

2. Reflecting on your own leadership, do you feel a deficit in any of the five areas described, and how might you improve in the future?

Beyond the Factors: The Threads of School Improvement

1. What are the three supporting concepts in what the author refers to as “the threads of change”?
2. If “problems are traceable to the broader society in which schools are nested,” what does that mean for school improvement efforts? Where should attention be directed?
3. Explain the four lines of disconnect between structure and school improvement.
4. What does the author mean by, “context is a cardinal, but not determinate variable in the change growth process”?
5. Why is coherence “one of the essential beams supporting the correlates of highly productive schools” and why is the principal “the prime actor in the coherence narrative”?

Understanding School Improvement

1. What does the author consider “the key dimensions of the school improvement framework”?
2. According to the punctuated equilibrium theory of organizational evolution there are two forces that provide the impetus for change in an institution. List what they are and give an example of each.
3. Describe the ways in which school improvement is different in a post-industrial world, specifically how it is reflective of “the three critical domains of schools.”
4. Explain what the text means by, “the demise of schooling as a sheltered government monopoly heavily controlled by professionals. In its stead...the emergence of a system of schooling...driven by economic and political forces.”
5. With “consumers” gaining the upper hand in the shifting relationship of school governance, four elements have emerged. What are they, and how do they support the arguments calling for locally controlled organizations?

Chapter 8

The Architecture of School Improvement

1. What does the author consider to be the “essential school improvement algorithm” and what does it represent?
2. The text uses the analogy, “building beautiful rooms on the third floor of a house without load-bearing walls.” Explain what the author means by this within the school improvement context.
3. Describe the three examples of “construction principles” given in the text.
4. What are the categories that productively blend the use of quality material and construction principles in school improvement?
5. What does the text conclude as being “the essential enabling element of school improvement work”?

Chapter 9

Leadership for Learning

1. Academics, practitioners, and reviewers from every field of study have concluded that _____ is a central variable in the equation that defines organizational success.
2. Describe the four major conditions that shape leadership behavior.
3. Give an example of a way in which an effective leader could “keep vision, mission, and goals at the forefront of everyone’s attention and at the center of everyone’s work.”
4. What are the two things that learning-centered leaders do when supplying feedback? Why are these important?
5. Why is “curriculum alignment” a major factor at high-performing schools? In what ways would an effective leader create “tightly coupled curriculum”?

The Norms of School as Academic Place

1. Describe and provide an example for each of the nine norms of schools as academic places.

Academic Care	
Challenge	
Task Focused Goals	
Actively Guided Learning	
Engagement and Vitality	
Cooperative Work	
Meaningfulness	
Student-Anchored Learning	
Evidence-Based Action and Feedback	

2. What are the three principles entwined within the norms that define schools as academic places?

Leadership for Learning: Culture and Community

1. Describe ways in which instructionally centered leaders establish expectations and support professional development?
2. Why are the most effective schools those who “underscore the principles of community”?
3. What does the author mean by, “effective organizations in all sectors, including education, are marked by a strong production focus”?
4. Explain the three types of personalization an effective school leader can promote, and give an example of each.
5. The text states, “Schooling for students is profoundly voluntary. Children have to ‘go to school.’ The decision to ‘do schooling’ is substantially their own.” What does this mean? And how, as an effective leader, can you positively influence students to “do schooling”?

Chapter 12

The Caring Leader

1. The text states that, “caring is a core pillar in improvement work.” What does this mean?
2. How does the political, economic, and social environment in which schools operate act as a toxin to caring?
3. Explain the ways in which caring within the school environment can be measured.
4. Looking at the “essential elements” of caring, identify which one(s) is/are lacking in your school, and describe a strategy to make improvements.
5. What attributes make for a caring leader?

Principles for Developing Culturally Appropriate Schools

1. Give an example of a way in which a school could “nurture students for who they are, and not [define them] by what they lack.”
2. How might you, in your own school, “scaffold education on the cultural capital of students, families, and communities”?
3. What are three ways in which culturally responsive schools create a climate of caring?
4. Why is advocacy particularly important in culturally disadvantaged schools?
5. Explain the benefits of “instructional relevance” in “culturally appropriate schooling.”

Chapter 14

The Other Wall: Communities of Pastoral Care for Students

1. What are the two foundational pillars that all high performing schools are built on?
2. What “foundational verities of education” are ignored by solely focusing on the academic side of school reform?
3. What are the “four powerful norms” that comprise pastoral care?

