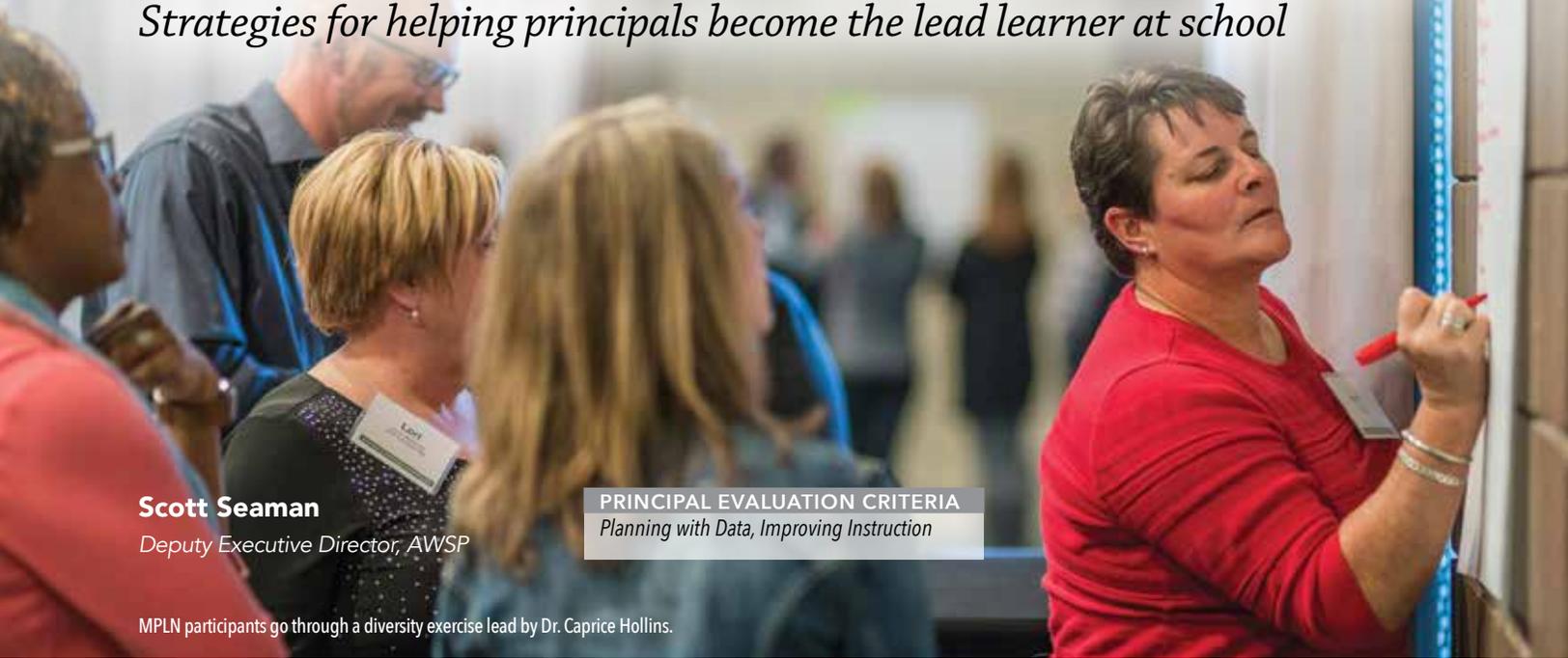


WHAT'S YOUR PLN?

Strategies for helping principals become the lead learner at school



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PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

Planning with Data, Improving Instruction

MPLN participants go through a diversity exercise lead by Dr. Caprice Hollins.

What's your PLN? Are you so busy worrying about the learning for everyone else you neglect your own professional growth and learning? Is your professional learning time spent running around popping into everyone else's PLCs? How is that helping you? And, is it really helping them?

STOP THE INSANITY.

There is an urgency for you to be the lead learner in your building. It all starts with you.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING NETWORKS

Research on adult learning indicates adults learn best through professional networks where participants are tackling relevant problems of practice connected to their work. The only way to have space to engage in these conversations is to participate in a professional learning network (PLN).

“Is your professional learning time spent running around popping into everyone else's PLCs?”

What's yours?

Is your “PLN” a district principals meeting where you spend more time on administrative tasks? Is it standing in the school cafeteria talking to yourself...or colleagues? Is it following other educational leaders on Twitter?

At AWSP, we believe in the power of professional learning networks and strive to create opportunities for principals to engage in PLNs. From specially designed PLNs for new principals to networks sharing best practices for veterans, we offer the full spectrum. We see principals engaging with each other in many ways around the state. And, more importantly, we see the results of principals networking, sharing,

collaborating and supporting each other.

The question remains: Why isn't every principal involved in a PLN? Again, what's yours?

MASTERING PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP NETWORK

Principaling alone is principaling ineffectively. There is no other way to spell that out for you. You must be engaged in some form of a PLN or you are missing the most powerful way to push your leadership to the next level. Your growth is the most important in your building. Who has a greater urgency to learn, you or the kids?

AWSP offers a PLN we refer to as the Mastering Principal Leadership Network (MPLN). This network consists of K-12 principals from all around the state who come together throughout the year to share their best practices, learn from each other, and stretch their comfort levels around school leadership. From tough

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conversations about race and equity to the sharing gap-closing strategies, this group hits it all.

Kristen Rue, principal at Chinook Middle School in North Thurston Public Schools and an MPLN participant, said her involvement in this PLN “helped me to kick start some game-changing initiatives in my building.” She added those initiatives are “translating to Chinook becoming a better place to work and go to school for our staff and students.”

The principal at Bonney Lake High School, Cris Turner, shared, “It is a privilege to be a part of a group [MPLN] of such professional and knowledgeable principals! In our everyday work, we run into an extremely large and diverse set of problems and issues. It is comforting to know others are experiencing that same things I am.” He went on to say, “No matter what the issue — scheduling, resource management, interventions, community connections, accountability measures, discipline, etc. — there is someone in the group who will be able to offer concrete strategies to successfully engage in the process of addressing the issue.”

At Toledo Elementary School, Principal Angela Bacon said her involvement in MPLN has expanded her knowledge, skills, and expertise. “My elementary has moved from being a Priority School to a Schools of Distinction and received a Washington State Achievement Award for closing the Achievement Gap for low income students,” she said.

STOP PRINCIPAL CHURN, START A PLN

So, what’s your PLN? If you are a new or newly assigned principal, you need to join our Launching Principal Leadership Network focused on building your foundation to have a long, successful career as a school leader. If you are in years 2-5,

then you need to join our Building Effective Leaders Network. This PLN will help you move your leadership and the impact on your school to new heights. The only way to do that is to engage with colleagues in ongoing, relevant and timely conversations about best practices.

All of our professional learning events and networks rest on the foundation of current research on adult learning. We believe in providing high quality, relevant and personalized professional learning opportunities for you. You will be engaged in rich discussions with colleagues and spend more time listening and sharing with each other than sitting through death-by-PowerPoint presentations from us. We guarantee you will walk out with tools, tangibles and takeaways to be used back in your building. In fact, we will model the professional learning you should be leading back in your school for your teachers.

So, what are you waiting for?

Principal churn in our state has a profound impact on student learning. A lot of churn is related to principals feeling overwhelmed by the daily demands of the job and the lack of support. We all know being a

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principal is one of the most important and rewarding jobs in the world. We need great principals to create great schools for kids. More importantly, we need those great principals to stay longer in their respective schools. When a school loses a principal, the process of creating culture has to start all over. To stop that churn, we need to do a better job of supporting principals to become even more effective while leading the same building over the course of time. That is what is best for kids.

The only way to increase our effectiveness is through the creation of powerful, rewarding and engaging principal professional learning networks. In order for you to be the best you for your students and staffulty, you must take care of yourself first.

What’s your PLN? ■

AWSP Theory of Professional Learning

Learning happens when adults ...

- **Access** expertise inside and outside of the group
- **Participate** in authentic activities with the group
- **Practice** with relevant Problems of Practice
- **Engage** (formally & informally) with colleagues
- **Apply** new learning to professional contexts
- **Reflect** on leadership and new learnings

