The Christian School Leadership Framework

STRATEGIC COMPETENCIES

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Professional Development Culture

Innovation and Technology

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Student Development and Spiritual Formation

RELATIONAL COMPETENCIES

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

LEAD PEOPLE

Self-awareness

Communication

Cultural Competence

Encourage the Heart

Inspire a Shared Vision

Team Building

Developing People

Leading the Board

BIBLICAL THOUGHT AND ACTION

LEADERSHIP FROM THE HEART
Commitment
Calling
Character
Chemistry

OPERATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Financial Management and Accounting

Operations Management (Facilities, Legal, HR)

Technology Planning and Management

Strategic Financial Planning

ADVANCEMENT LEADERSHIP

Face of the School

Student Recruitment, Admissions and Retention

Marketing and Communication

Fund Development

DRIVE RESULTS

Challenge the Process

Decision Making

Performance Reviews

Planning and Execution

The Christian School Leadership Framework (CSLF) describes the competencies and behaviors considered most important to the performance of heads of Christian schools. The CSLF is built on three major categories: (1) Leadership from the Heart, (2) Relational Competencies – essential personal skills or processes, and (3) Strategic Competencies – key content areas.

The architecture of the CSLF is modeled after KIPP Leadership Framework and Competency Model. "Our leadership framework is the high-level category architecture that assists in organizing our competencies and showing how those competencies relate to one another. A competency can be defined as *a cluster of related knowledge, skills and attitudes that affects a major part of one's job.*" KIPP Leadership Framework and Competency Model, p.2, www.kipp.org.

Inspire a Shared Vision, Encourage the Heart, and Challenge the Process come from Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 2012.
Model the Way and Enable Others to Act are also built into this framework without those labels.

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THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK (CSLF)

Introduction. Leadership effectiveness is the most significant factor in organizational effectiveness, and although literature on leadership is growing exponentially, there is little consensus around leadership definitions. In response to the growing demand for capable leaders of Christian schools, a group of Christian school leaders developed a research based comprehensive leadership framework to assist in the process of growing effective Christian school leaders.

Leadership Competencies. The Christian School Leadership Framework (CSLF) describes the competencies and behaviors considered most important to the performance of heads of Christian schools. The architecture of the CSLF is modeled after KIPP Leadership Framework and Competency Model. The KIPP model states: "Our leadership framework is the high-level category architecture that assists in organizing our competencies and showing how those competencies relate to one another. A competency can be defined as "*a cluster of related knowledge, skills and attitudes that affects a major part of one's job* (a role or responsibility), that correlates with performance on the job, that can be measured against well-accepted standards, and that can be improved via training and development" (Parry, 1996, p.50).[1] The CSLF consists of three major categories: (1) Leadership from the Heart, (2) Relational Competencies, and (3) Strategic Competencies. The explanations of each competency include key behaviors or knowledge that leaders must demonstrate to show effectiveness in that competency.

Leadership from the Heart. Christ centered leadership begins with (1) Commitment of the heart to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Additional components include: (2) Calling, (3) Character, and (4) Chemistry – referring to "natural chemistry" of personality and ability. This cluster of competencies is surrounded by the circle of "Biblical thought and action", which refers to the biblical worldview "lens" that Christian school leaders must use to view all aspects of the school and of leadership.

Relational Competencies. Leadership effectiveness requires a mix of knowledge, skills and character qualities in dealing with people.. The three subcategories of these relational (or process) competencies are: (1) Build Relationships, (2) Lead People, and (3) Drive Results, each with four key elements.

Strategic Competencies. Effective Christian school leadership requires knowledge in multiple areas. The CSLF includes three main subcategories of strategic (or content) competencies*:* (1) Instructional Leadership, (2) Advancement Leadership, and (3) Operational Leadership, each with four key elements.

No single leader can excel in every element component of the CSLF. School effectiveness increases with leadership teams composed of members with differing strengths. Utilizing a leadership team is difficult for leaders in small schools. The CSLF is primarily a North American leadership model that needs contextualization in other global settings.

LEADERSHIP FROM THE HEART (Christ centered competencies)**.**

1. **Commitment.** The starting point for the Christian life and the Christian leader is a heart commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord. The Christian school leader must also have a deep commitment to Christian schooling.

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[1] KIPP Leadership Framework and Competency Model, p.2, accessed at www.kipp.org, 11/14/2013.

2. **Calling.** Although the Christian school is an educational institution (not a church), it is a spiritual ministry. The Christian school leader must feel a sense of God's calling to leadership; not based on credentials, but based on a Spirit led conviction that God has placed him/her in this particular leadership seat at this time. All key leadership positions bring varying degrees of conflict and criticism, and without a strong sense of calling, leaders will waiver in their commitment to lead. Leaders should also have significant external confirmation from others that God has gifted them to lead.

3. **Character.** The effective Christian school leader must go beyond a personal commitment to Christ to a daily, personal, Spirit led walk with Christ that demonstrates the fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-26). Every Christian leader should see Jesus Christ as the ultimate example of leadership, and Christ both taught and modeled servant leadership. (Mark 10:41-45; John 13:12-17) The power of servant leadership has also been recognized by the academic community,[2] and other research suggests that the combination of humility and determination produce the most effective leaders.[3] The concepts in Kouzes and Posner's category of "Model the Way"[4] are included in character.

4. **Chemistry.** Chemistry is this context refers to the leaders "natural wiring" – which includes natural ability, personality, and ability to handle multiple levels of relationships. There are various tools (Strength-finders, Myers-Briggs, DISC) to assist in helping a leader recognize some aspects of gifting and/or personality types.

The Circle of Biblical Thought and Action. This is the window through which leaders must view all of their tasks and responsibilities. Understanding and implementing a Christian philosophy of leadership is a prerequisite to biblical transformational leadership.

RELATIONAL COMPETENCIES

1. **Build Relationships.** The effective Christian school leader builds relationships through:
   a. *Self-awareness:* the leader understands his/her own strengths and weaknesses; seeks constructive feedback and personal professional development; understands how others perceive his/her actions, comments and tone.
   b. *Communication*: the leader listens attentively, seeking to understand other's points of view; understands and utilizes different channels of communication appropriately; writes clearly, concisely and persuasively; speaks in a compelling and articulate manner and adapts communication content and style to the audience being addressed.
   c. *Cultural Competence:* the leader demonstrates knowledge and respect for the cultures of the community served; creates an inclusive environment; is keenly aware of others; values diversity and works effectively with those from diverse backgrounds.
   d. *Encouraging the Heart*: the leader recognizes contributions, provides extensive affirmation, and celebrates values and victories.[5]

2. **Lead People.**
   a. *Inspire a Shared Vision*: the leader envisions the future; communicates vision with passion; enlists others by appealing to shared aspirations.[6]

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[2] Northouse, Peter: *Leadership: Theory and Practice,* Sage Publications, 2013. Chapter 10, "Servant Leadership", p. 219-252.
[3] Collins, Jim: *Good to Great.* Harper Business, 2001.
[4] Kouzes, James and Posner, Barry, *The Leadership Challenge.* Jossey Bass, Fifth Edition, 2012.
[5] Kouzes, James and Posner, Barry, *The Leadership Challenge.* Jossey Bass, Fifth Edition, 2012. p.271.
[6] Kouzes and Posner, p.99

b. *Team Building*: the leader fosters collaboration; strengthens others; clarifies roles, responsibilities, accountabilities and decision making among team members; delegates; resolves conflict. (Kouznes and Posner call this "Enable Others to Act").

c. *Leading the Board*: effective Christian school leadership requires collaboration with a strategic governing board; effective leaders understand and managing the delicate balance between "leading" the board and submitting to their authority; they are able to build relationships with those in authority.

d. *Developing People:* the leader identifies and retains talent; implements effective recruitment and selection processes; creates professional development opportunities for all staff; provides mentoring to key leaders and emerging leaders.

3. **Drive Results**
   a. *Challenge the Process:* the leader is able to question status quo; searches for opportunities, innovation, and creative solutions; experiments and takes risks, implements effective change management.[7]

   b. *Decision Making*: the leader establishes clear decision making processes; makes timely decisions using intuition as well as data in the face of ambiguity; communicates decisions to relevant stakeholders; willingly makes and stands by controversial decisions that strengthen the school.

   c. *Performance Reviews:* the leader holds high expectations for spiritual, academic, relational and professional performance; implements rigorous yet positive performance reviews that mix affirmation with suggestions for improvement; provides needed support and training; eventually manages out staff members who do not meet expectations.

   d. *Planning and Execution*: the leader implements participatory processes in strategic and operational planning; manages time and resources effectively; regularly compares actual progress to planned milestones, adjusts plans accordingly; holds him or herself and others accountable for achieving intended outcomes.

STRATEGIC COMPETENCIES

Strategic competencies require adequate knowledge of three key areas: Instructional Leadership; Advancement Leadership, and Operational Leadership. However, effective leaders develop leadership teams where team members have greater content knowledge that the head of school does in a specific area. Thus, school heads do not need to be content experts in every area but they must have general knowledge in order to select, support and supervise their key leadership team members.

1. **Instructional Leadership**
   a. *Knowledge and Involvement in Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment*[8]: the leader has a broad understanding of curriculum development, trends in pedagogy, formative and summative assessments; is continually growing in instructional leadership skills; develops a team around him/her that provides building level leadership in these areas.

   b. *Professional Development Culture*[9]: the leader works to build a professional development culture in the school; provides adequate resources in dollars and time for ongoing professional growth; encourages collaborative discussion and goal setting to achieve instructional goals.

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[7] Kouzes and Posner, p.155

[8] Marzano, Waters and McNulty: *School Leadership That Works: From Research to Results,* ASCD, 2005.

[9] ISM in various publications discussing Stability Markers

c. *Innovation and Technology*: the leader is conversant with educational innovation that improves student achievement; understands the use of technology in school management and in student achievement.

d. *Student Development and Spiritual Formation*: the leader drives developmentally appropriate spiritual formation activities; values student learning and leadership opportunities outside core curricular areas, including the visual and performing arts, athletics, student ministry, service learning, academic clubs, etc.

2. **Advancement Leadership**

a. *Face of the School*: the leader serves as "tribal story teller" and "the face of the school" for internal and external audiences; including parents, faculty and staff, donors, local churches, civic organizations, and educational communities. The leader must consistently model godly character qualities as well as the core values of the school; he/she must be a living model of what the school stands for (Model the Way). The leader is willing to invest time in mentoring younger leaders and serving the Christian school movement.

b. *Marketing and Communication*: the leader understands the basic principles of marketing and effective communication strategies to different constituencies; oversees the implementation of effective marketing strategies.

c. *Student Recruitment, Admissions, and Retention*: the leader understands that enrollment drives ministry impact and finances; commits energy and resources to student recruitment, provides leadership and oversight to an effective admissions process; monitors retention trends.

d. *Fund Development* (Annual and Capital Fund Raising); the leader understands that major donor cultivation and solicitation is an essential task for Christian school leaders; understands overall development and fund raising strategies and staffing.

3. **Operational Leadership**

a. *Financial Management and Accounting*
    i. Accounting and reporting: the leader is not a CPA but understands a balances sheet, audit reports, provides accurate and timely financial reports to the board; manages to the budget; oversees operating and capital expenditures.
    ii. Budgeting: the leader oversees an annual budgeting process that provides adequate funding for school operations.
    iii. Managing cash and endowments: the leader understands and provides effective oversight to cash flow and endowment management processes.

b. *Operations Management (Facilities, Legal Awareness, and Human Resources):* the leader understands the importance of stewardship of physical plant assets; manages current operations including facilities, transportation, food service; is aware of legal and human resource issues and risks; provides leadership in improving operations and facilities.

c. *Strategic Financial Planning*: the leader implements an ongoing comprehensive strategic planning process that incorporates multi-year financial planning.

d. *Technology Support/Planning*: the leader oversees the development of technology planning and implementation.

Note: no single leader can do all of these things well simultaneously, but the wise leader manages all components with support from others.