Leading for Learning

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University of Minnesota
Driven to Discover℠

GROUNDING ASSUMPTIONS

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(1) This is an age of transformation

Every few hundred years throughout history a sharp transformation has occurred. In a matter of decades, society altogether rearranges itself.

Fifty years later a new world exists. And the people born into it cannot imagine the world in which their grandparents lived and into which their own parents were born.

Drucker, P. (1995). Managing in a time of great change. New York: Talley House, Dutton.

(2) Change Occurs From the Outside-In More Often than the Inside-Out

"In all instances in modern society change is exceptional. When it comes about, it does so primarily as a response to outside forces. In no case does it come readily."

O'Toole, J. (1995). *Leading change*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

(3) Tradition is a Conserving Force

"A world in which change is the rule would be characterized by chaos, leading to social collapse.

Therefore, a society must have one foot permanently on the brake; it must have a pre-disposition to tradition and conservatism."

O'Toole, J. (1995). *Leading change*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Cultural Expectations Play Out in Schools

TRANSFORMATIONAL FORCES

CONSERVATIONAL FORCES

Can School Culture and School Leaders Be POWERFUL Tools for Effective Change?

Cultural Challenge: Introductions

- Introduce yourself to someone sitting near you who you do not know well (turn around?)
- Share how students, teachers (or parents) in your school are responding to transformational forces and conserving forces
- Share a cultural challenge that you are currently facing in your school….
- Keep those in mind so we can talk about them later…

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Sweden and Minnesota

Culture and Leadership

Sweden

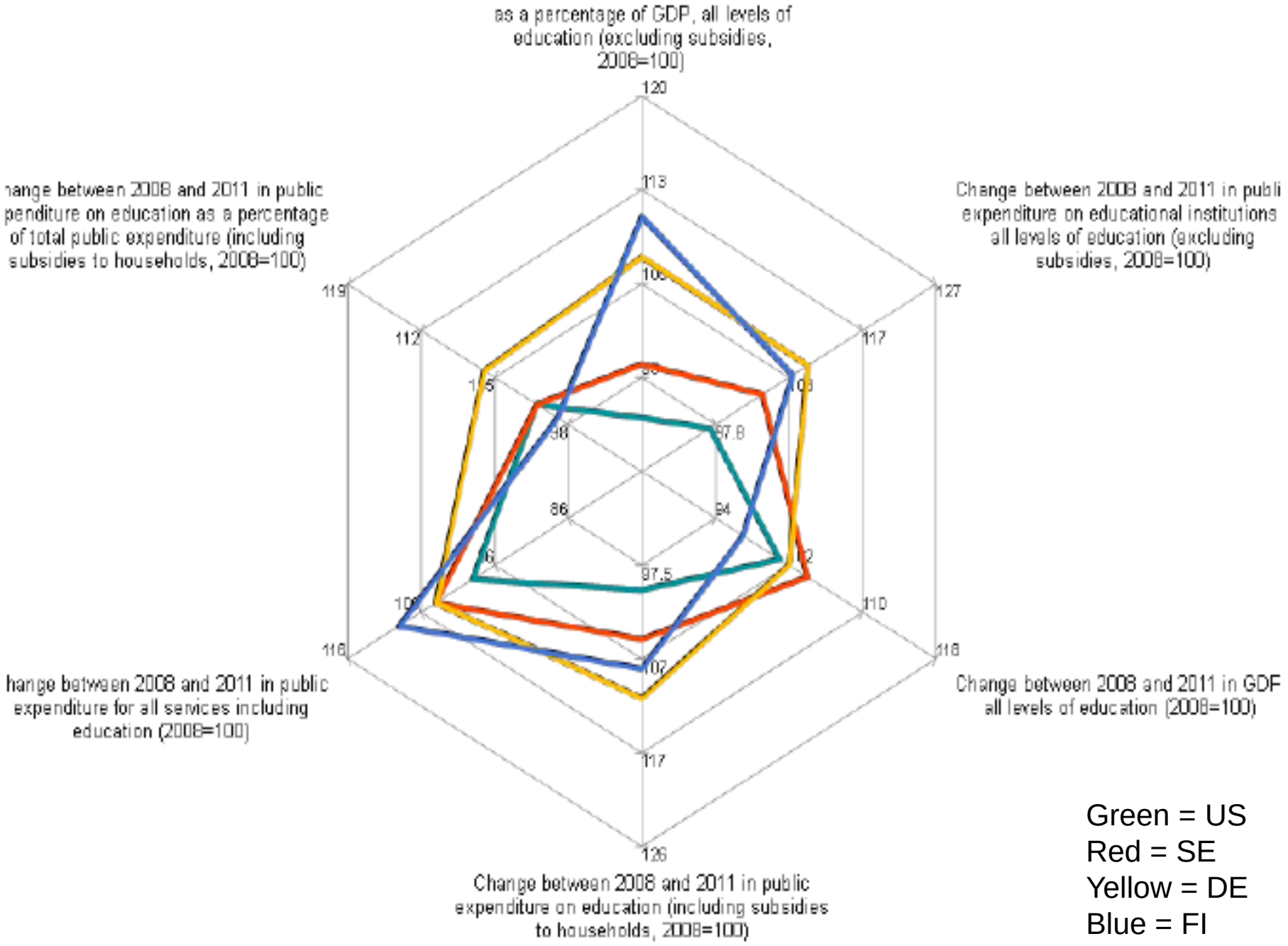
- *"Individualism" – moderate*
- *"Masculinity" – low*
- "Long-term Orientation" -- moderate
- "Power Distance" – moderate
- "Uncertainty Avoidance" – low

U.S.

- *"Individualism" – high*
- "Masculinity" – high
- "Long-term Orientation" -- moderate
- "Power Distance" – moderate
- "Uncertainty Avoidance" - low

(Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences*, 2001)

Policy Context



Green = US
Red = SE
Yellow = DE
Blue = FI

US AND SE: Common Themes

Weak scores on international tests

Declining equity in performance

(Ulf Lundgren)

Weak teaching; fewer people applying to become teachers

(Caroline Liberg)

‘It is not a particular reform, initiative or reason behind the development. The policy has created a slippery slope for the Swedish school system that depends on many factors. It is naive to believe otherwise.’ (Ulf Lundgren)

Important Cultural Strengths:

- Swedes are life-long learners
- Education remained a social priority, even under the former center-right government
- Efforts to create equitable opportunities have not abated
- Education and employment are closely linked

Under These Conditions….

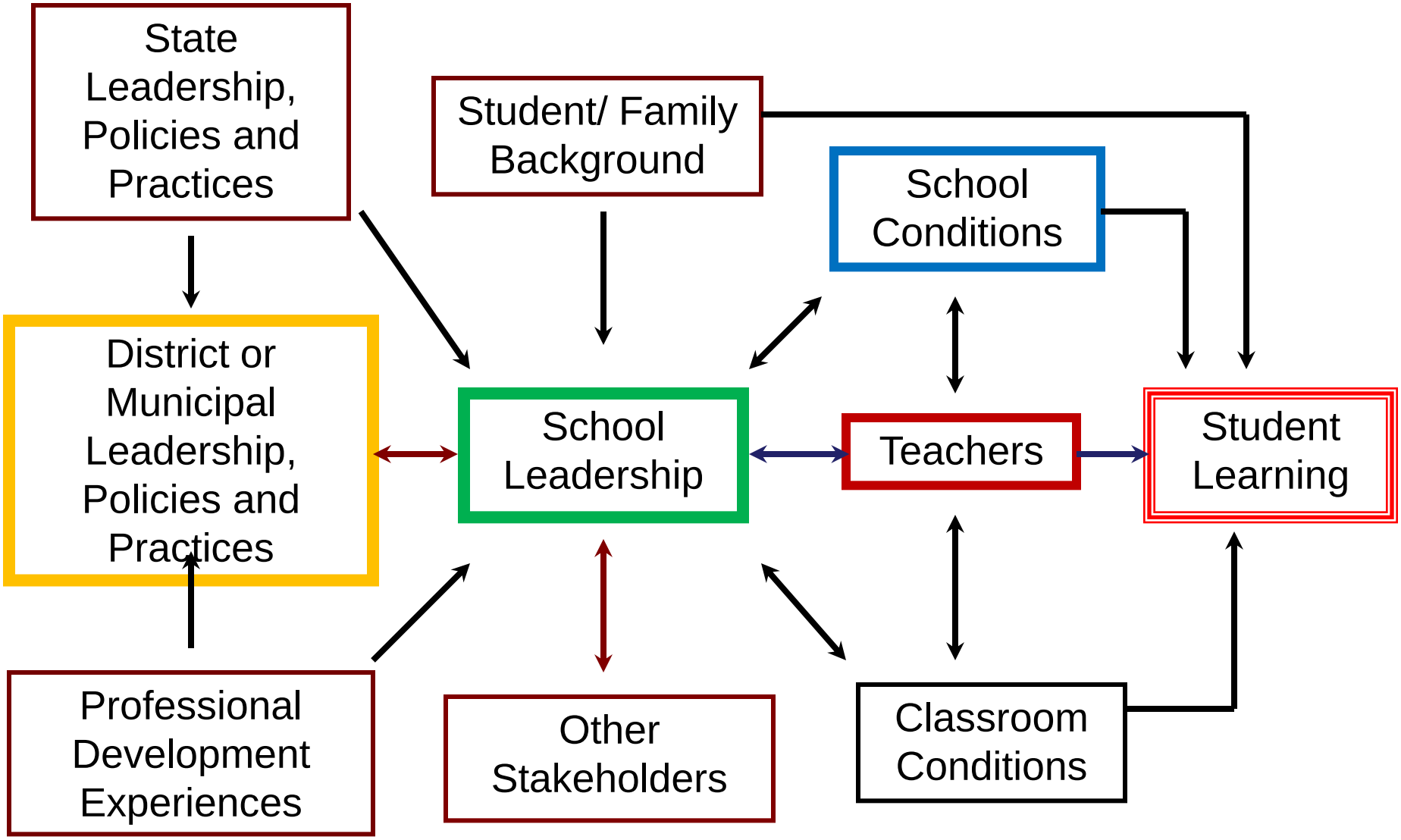
- How do leaders influence student learning?
- What patterns of leadership, from teachers, principals, and district staff, influence the *quality of instruct*ion and *student learning*?

More Challenges: Introductions

- Think of an enduring (hard to change) characteristic of your school that keeps it from being the best it could be…
- How have you tried to address it? How well has that worked?
- Share that challenge with someone sitting near you….
- Keep it in mind …

NOW FOR THE PROMISED RESEARCH….

Source of Ideas about Integrative Leadership in Education



We Began with What is Known

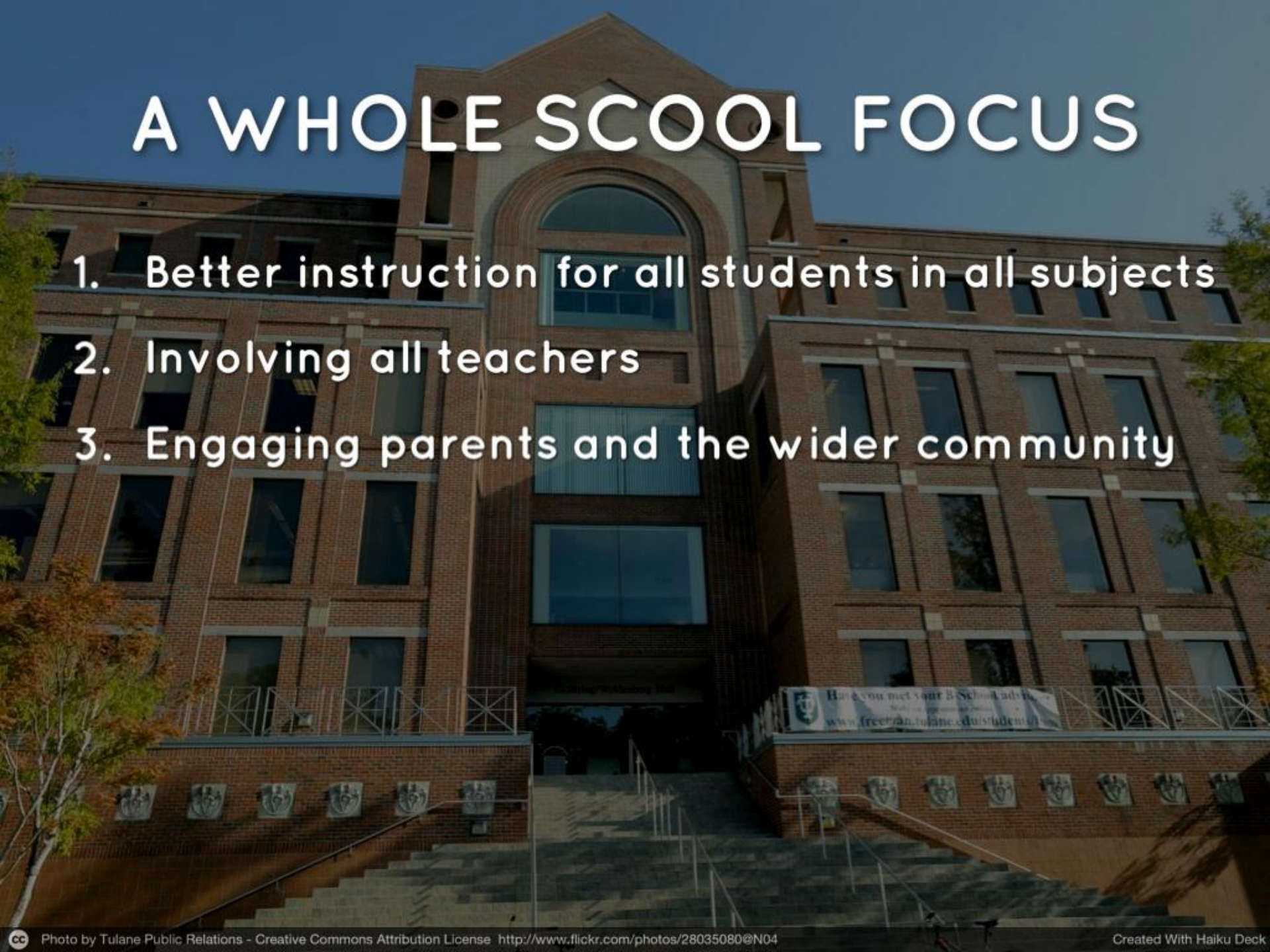
1. Leadership effects on students are indirect.

2. Leadership matters most when and where it is most needed.

Now, on to our findings…

A WHOLE SCOOL FOCUS

1. Better instruction for all students in all subjects
2. Involving all teachers
3. Engaging parents and the wider community



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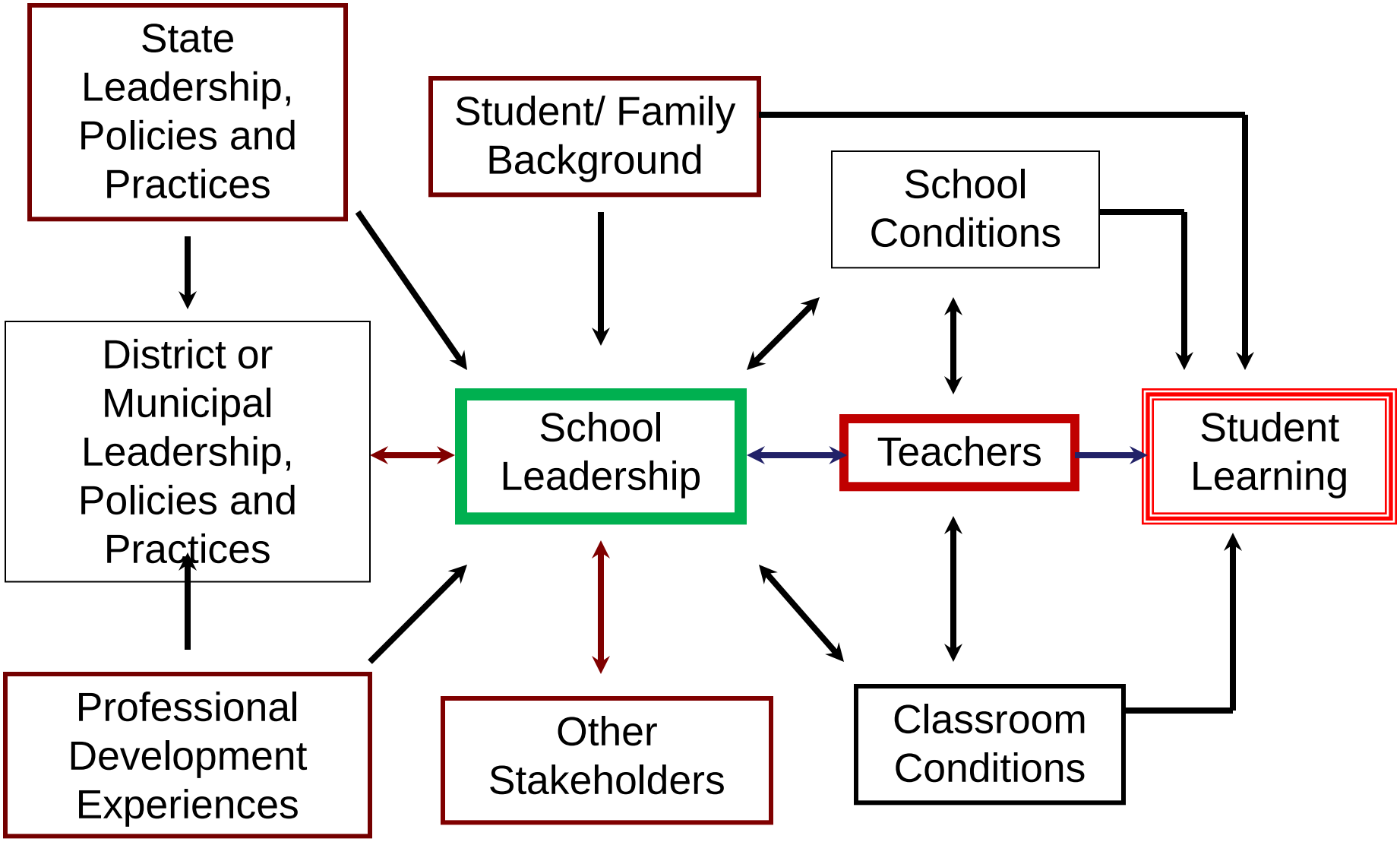
WHAT DOES THIS MEAN IN PRACTICE? Where can principals start?

FOCUS ON LEADERS AND TEACHERS



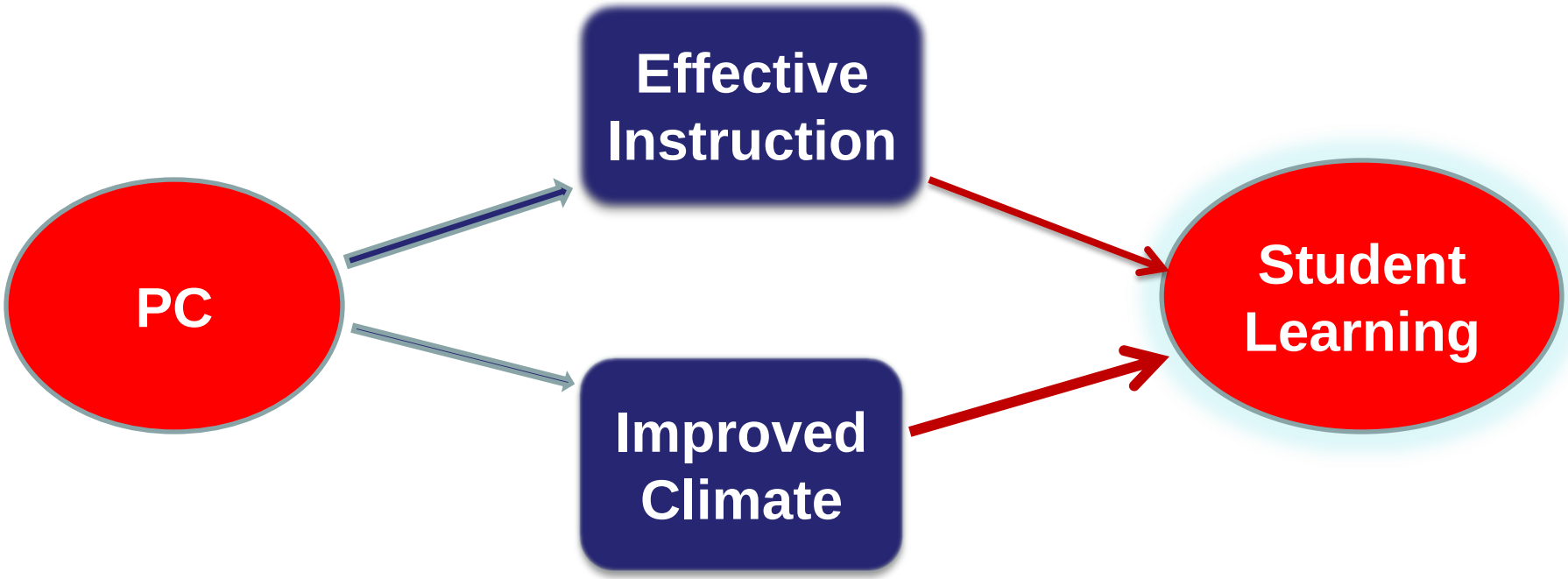
Leadership for Professional Community

- **Leadership is most effective when it strengthens "professional community"—which is teachers working together to improve their practice and improve student learning.**

Elements of Professional Community

1. Shared norms and values
2. Collective focus on student learning
3. Collaboration
4. Reflective dialogue
5. “Deprivatized” practice

The Power of Professional Community (PC)



PC (Professional Community) *Is Not (Necessarily)* PLCs

- PLCs = structural vehicle to provide opportunity (teacher teams)
- PC = actual level of teacher collaboration (teacher behavior)
- PC IS THE BASIS FOR EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

How Does Sweden Fare?

- EducationGPS_Topic_report (3).pdf

Buzz

Consider the elements of professional community – which are already present in your school? Which present real challenges?

1. Shared norms and values
2. Collective focus on student learning
3. Collaboration
4. Reflective dialogue
5. “Deprivatized” practice

SHARE ONE CHALLENGE WITH SOMEONE NEAR YOU….

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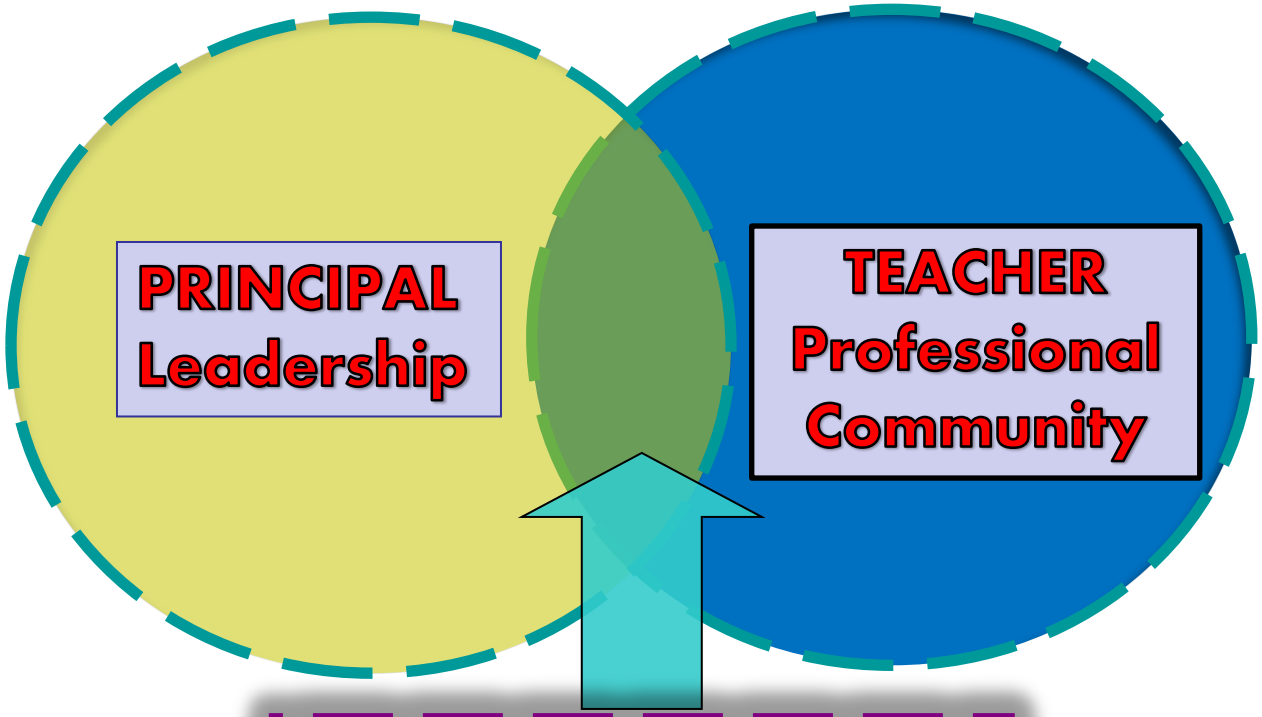
Leadership for Instructional Improvement

- ….affects working relationships and, indirectly, student achievement. (***Instructional Leadership***)
- ….is shared, fostering stronger teacher working relationships. (***Shared Leadership***)
- ….creates a culture of support for student academic work (***Caring***)

What This Means….

According to Teachers, Principals…

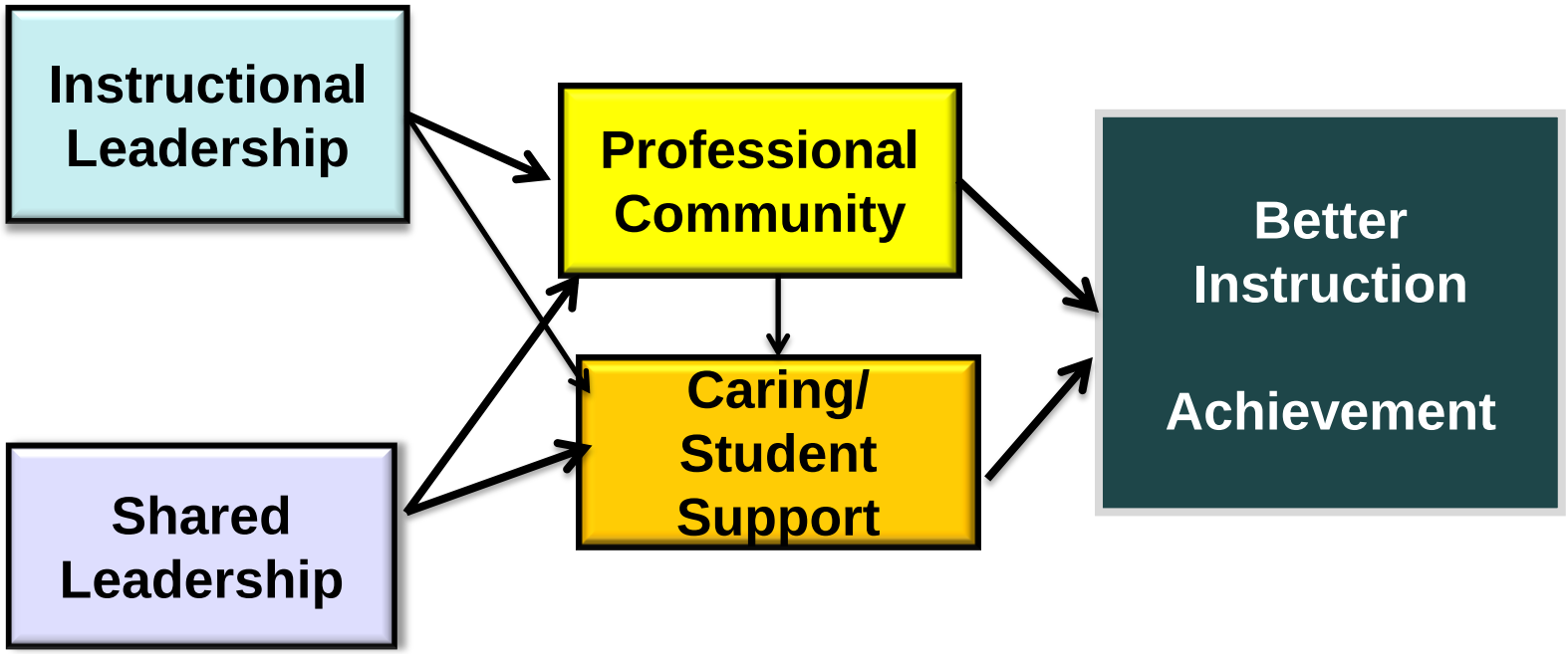
- observe classrooms and ask questions that provoke teachers to think
- give “power” over curriculum priorities and school practices to teachers; teachers are always consulted
- ensure that all students have equal opportunity to have the best teachers
- Use staff meetings to talk about equity and instruction, not about procedures
- Ask all teachers to observe other classrooms



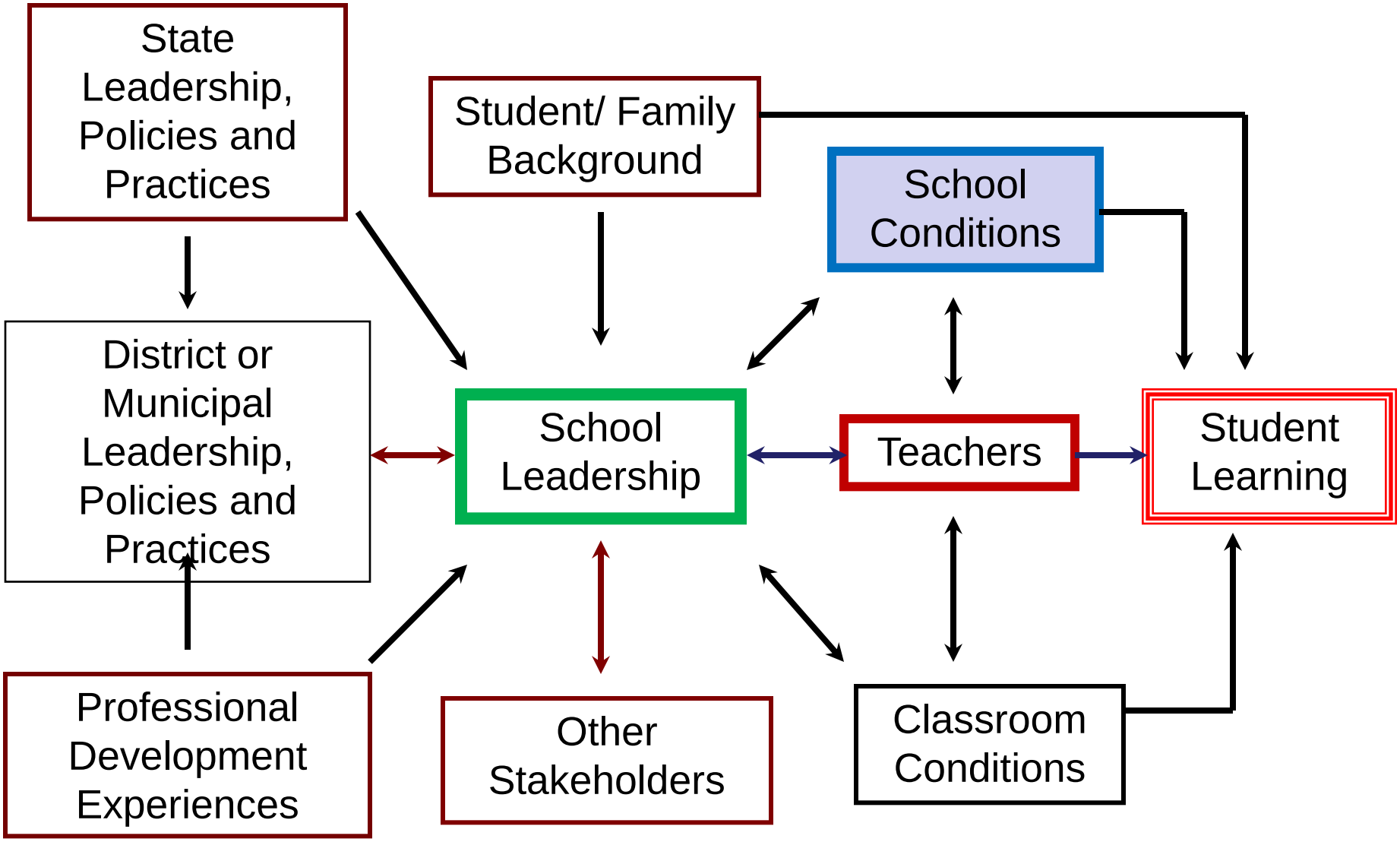
Shared Responsibility for Instruction

Shared Responsibility for Student Support

Leadership for and with Teachers and Student Achievement



FOCUS ON LEADERS AND SCHOOL CULTURE

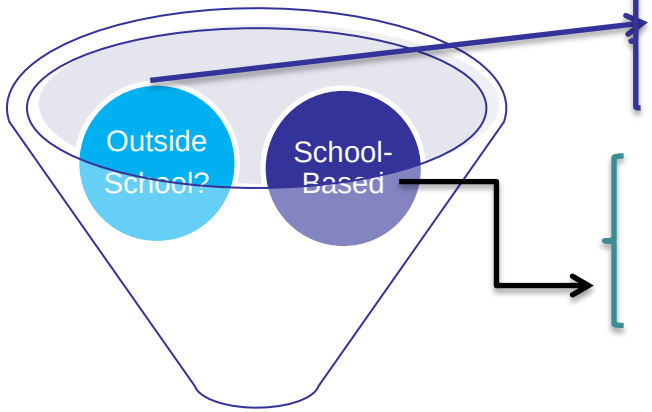


PRINCIPALS SHAPE CULTURE

What Does It Take to Unfreeze Culture?

Credit – Jennifer York-Barr

ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING



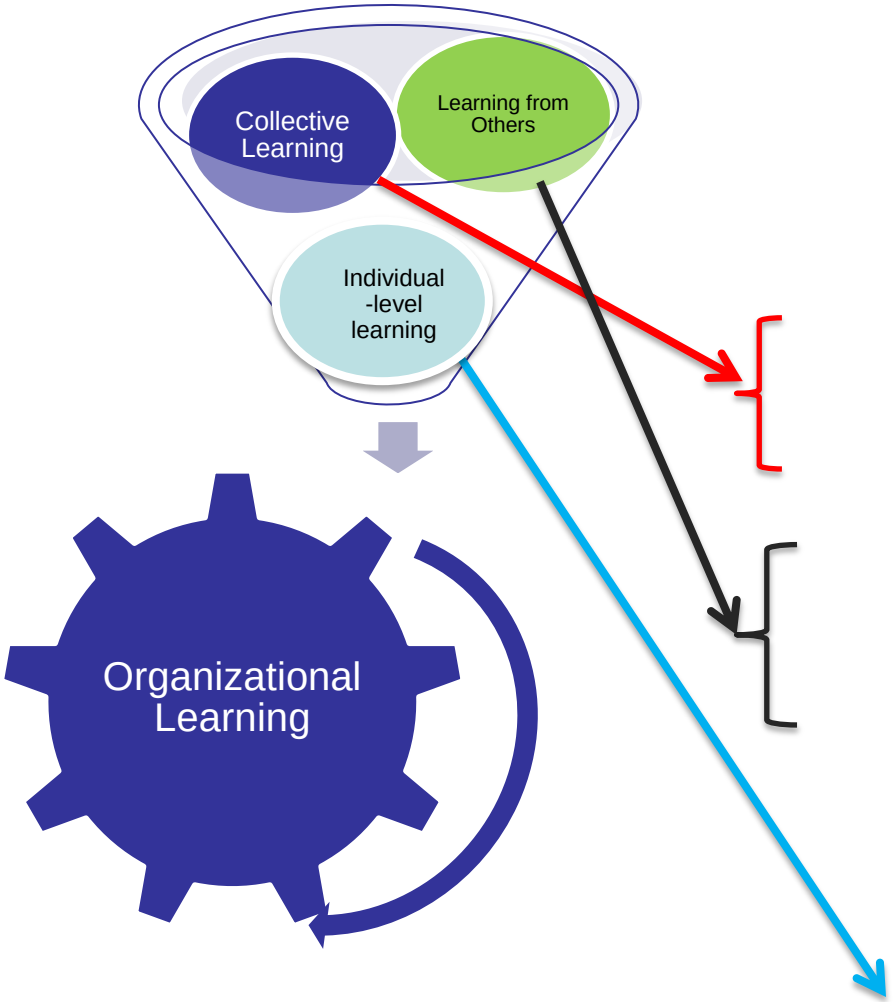
- SEARCHING FOR KNOWLEDGE
- SHARING KNOWLEDGE

- EVALUATING KNOWLEDGE
- USING KNOWLEDGE

- Andy Hargreaves: **"Strong and sustainable PLCS are also connected to others around them. They learn from the outside as well as the inside"**

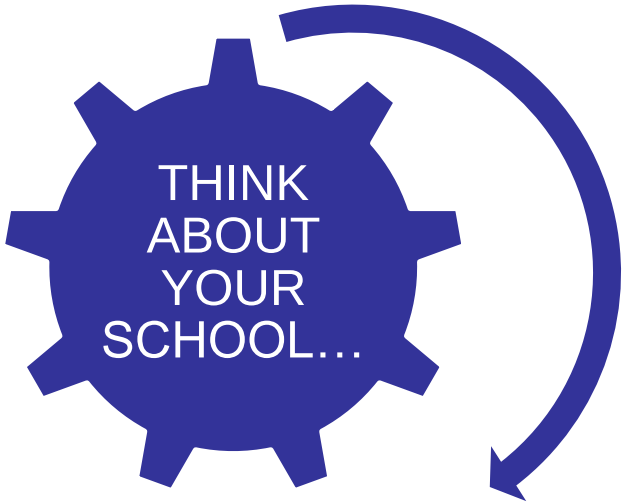
- Louis Stoll and Karen Seashore Louis: **"Without due attention to fostering ties outside the school, strong professional communities can, paradoxically, become a barrier to change"**

ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING OCCURS EVERYWHERE



- How many teachers in this school show initiative to identify and solve problems? (SEARCHING)
- How many teachers in this school seek out and read current findings in educational research? (SEARCHING)
- How many teachers in this school share current findings in education with colleagues? (SHARING)
- After attending professional development activities this past year, did you discuss what you learned with other teachers in your school who did not attend the activity? (EVALUATING)
- After attending professional development activities this past year, did you discuss or share what you learned with administrators? (EVALUATING)
- After attending professional development activities this past year, did you make changes in your teaching practice? (USING)

ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING OCCURS EVERYWHERE



WHAT COULD YOU DO TO INCREASE ONE OF THESE PRACTICES?

- How many teachers in this school show initiative to identify and solve problems? (SEARCHING)
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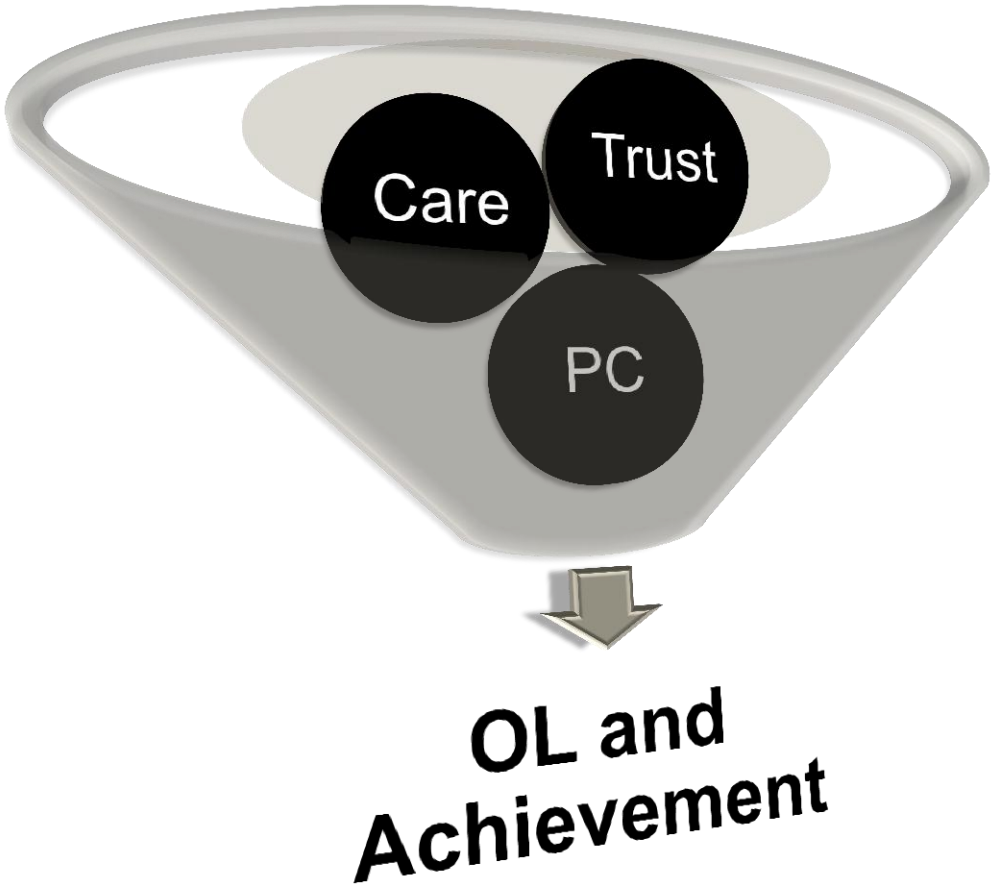
OL AND ACHIEVIEVEMENT DEPEND ON A SOLID ADULT CULTURE

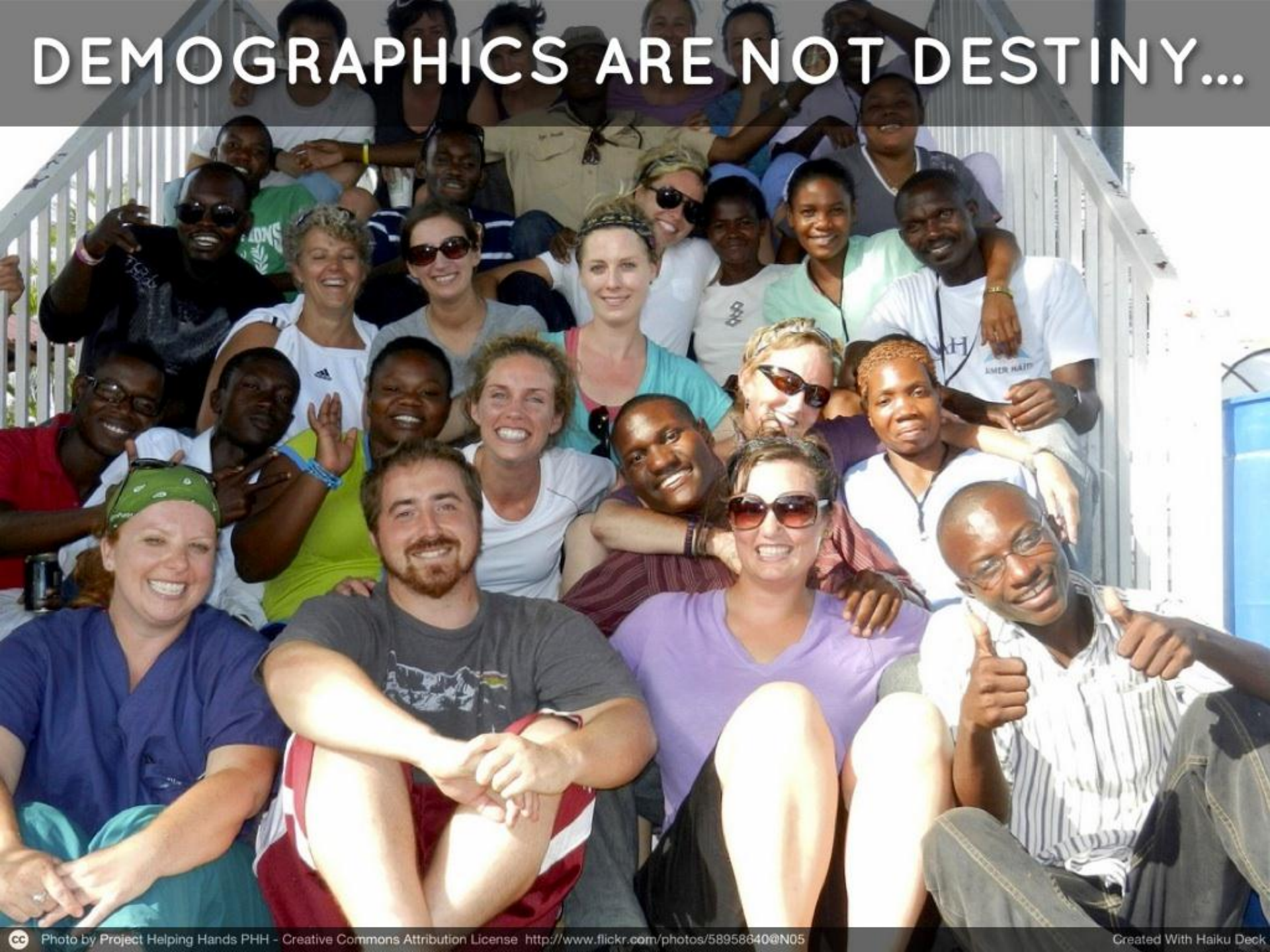


The Fourth Component of Culture: Expectations and Accountability

1. Standards and clear expectations
2. Appraisals aligned with standards
3. Meaningful feedback loops
4. Minimizing one-shot, high stakes assessments
5. Clear results/fair outcomes

SIMPLE APPROACHES CAN HAVE NEGATIVE EFFECTS

DEMOGRAPHICS ARE NOT DESTINY...



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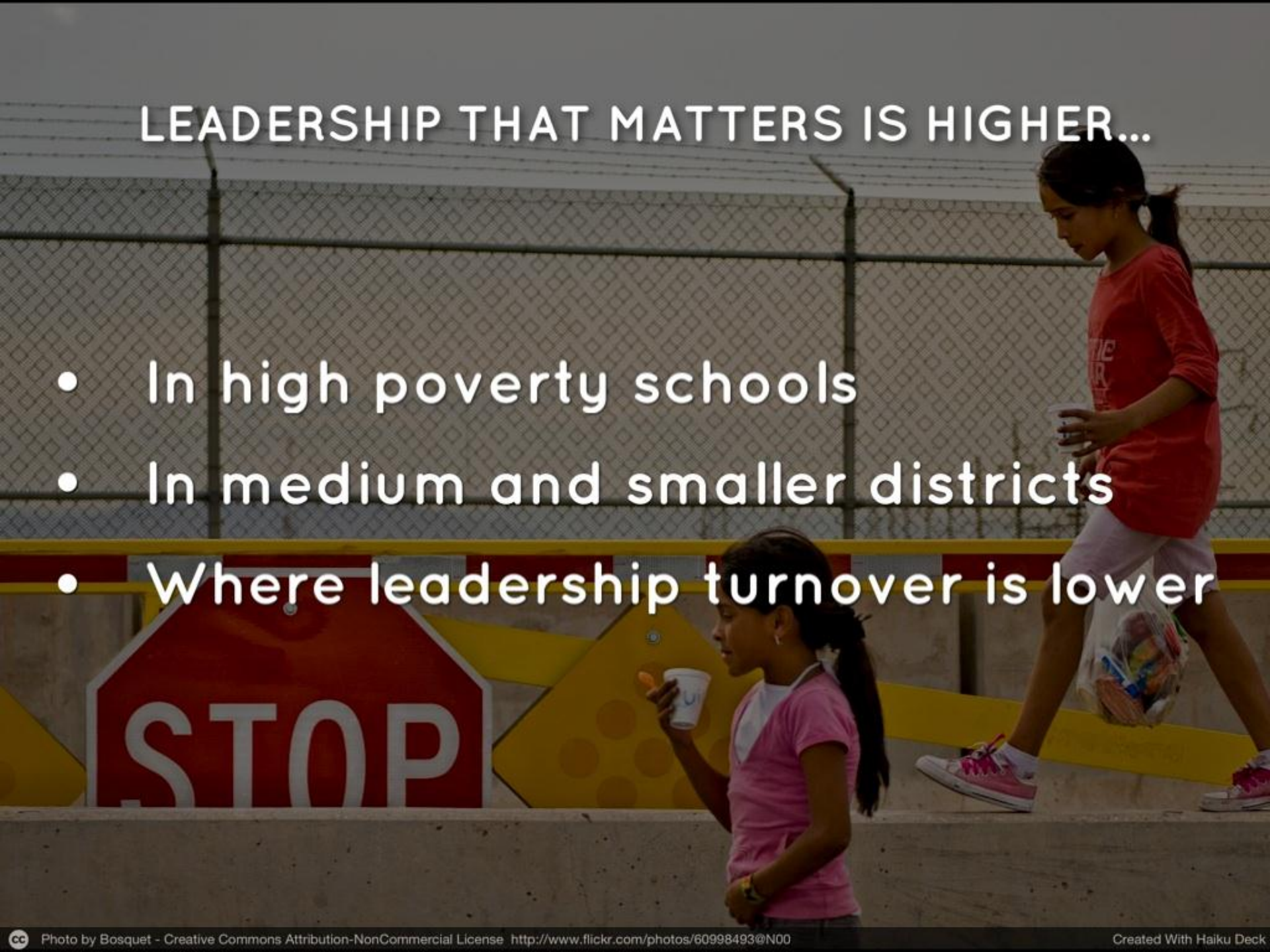
LEADERSHIP THAT MATTERS IS HIGHER...



- In high poverty schools
- In medium and smaller districts
- Where leadership turnover is lower

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THE PROBLEM OF TURNOVER

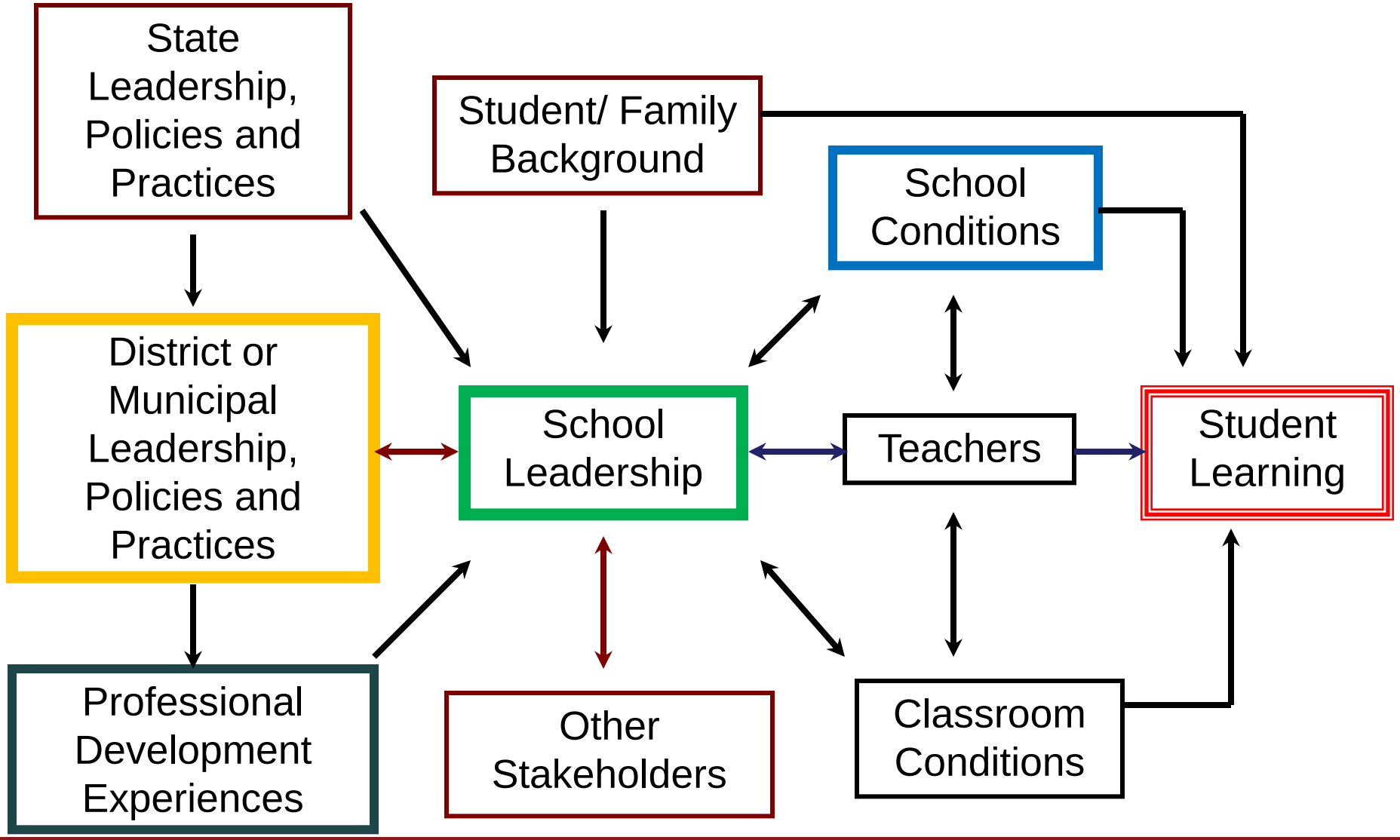
The Problem of Turnover….

- The typical school in the U.S. has a new principal every 3.2 years. Teachers are “aging out”
- Turnover is negatively related to student achievement
- Districts approached the issue of principal and teacher quality as a “hiring problem”
- Districts did not have strategies for managing turnover
- Schools with higher teacher PC managed turnover better

At The School Level in Sweden

- Schools hire Teachers
- Schools influence teacher retention
- More experienced teachers are just as engaged in change as younger teachers
- Who is involved? How does hiring affect PC?
- Principals and school culture have a big impact
- Teams that cross disciplines, ages, and gender creates a stronger culture

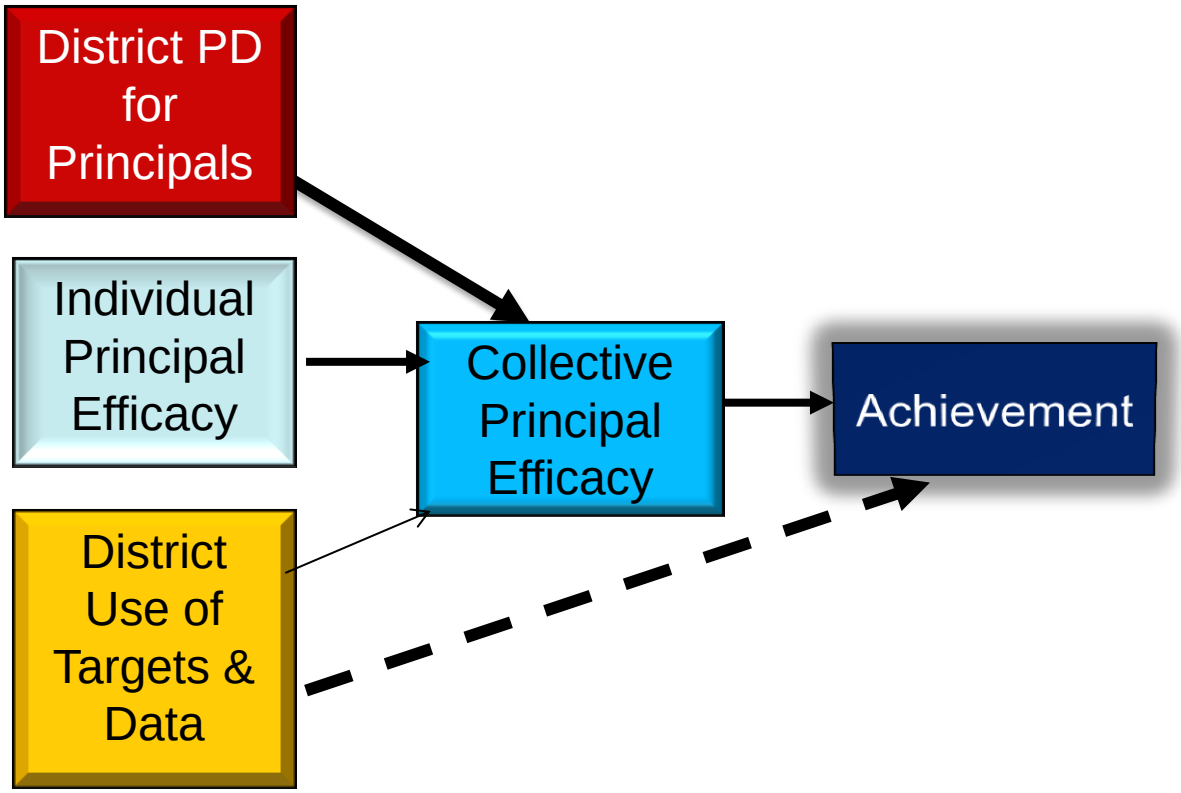
FOCUS ON MUNICIPAL/DISTRICT LEADERSHIP ROLES



Districts Affect Achievement

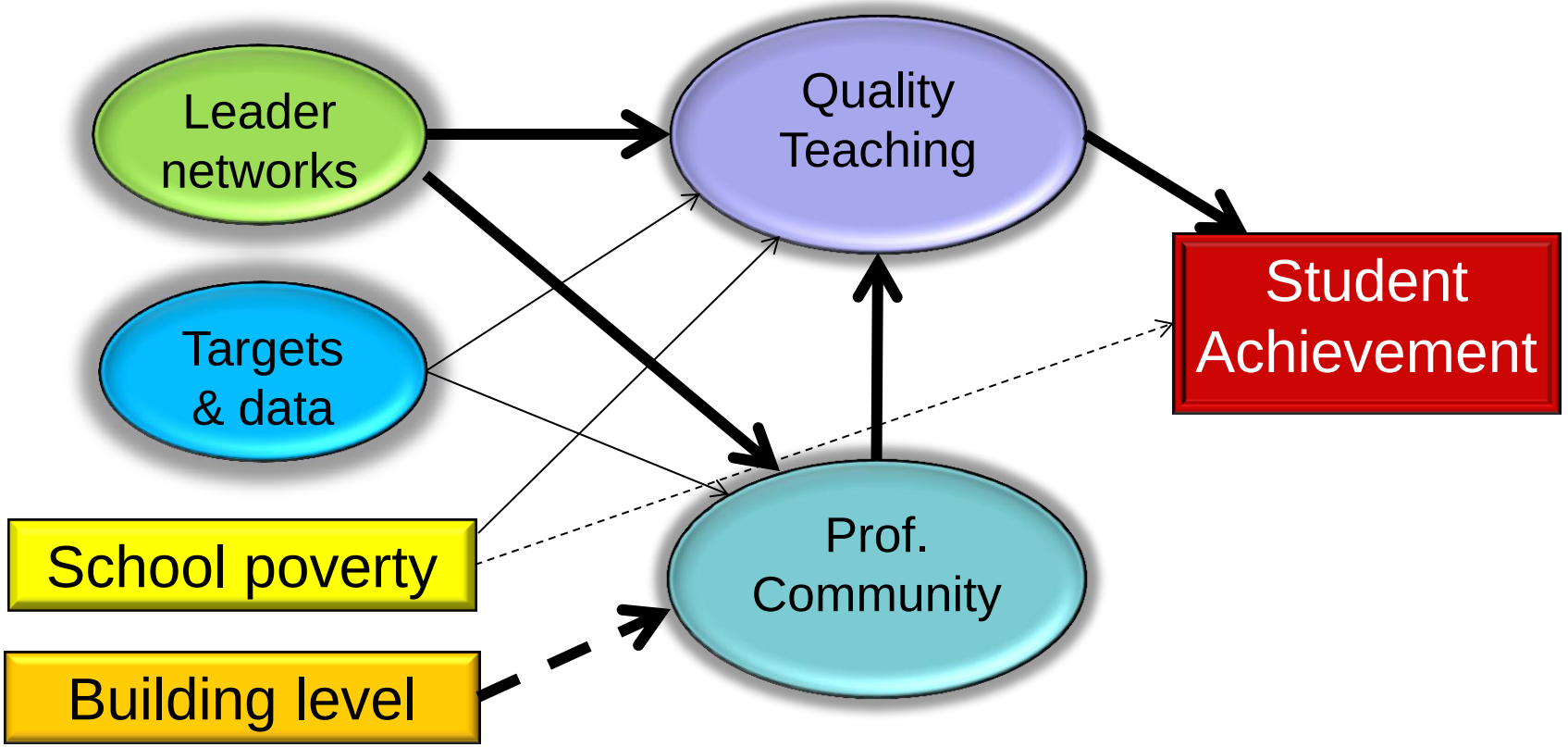
Using data and setting targets has negative effects on instructional leadership and achievement when principal confidence is low.

DISTRICTS CAN SUPPORT PRINCIPALS



Solid lines indicate a positive relationship.
Dotted lines indicate a negative relationship.

Professional Community for Principals



BUT: Professional Development for Leaders is Often Insufficient

- Few U.S. districts have a coherent professional development system for principals; most rely on episodic events
- Few principals have regular contact with a (mentor/coach) in the district office.
- Only half of principals agree that the district leaders assist them to be better instructional leaders in their schools.

Districts, Leadership PD, and Student Learning

Leaders in higher-performing districts…

1. Communicated explicit expectations for principal instructional leadership
2. Provided learning experiences in line with these expectations.
3. Monitored principal follow-through
4. Provided further support where needed, including
   - discussions about school performance and improvement plans
   - informal advising and coaching interventions.
5. Modeled effective data use

Key PD Practices in Schools and Districts….

1. Promoting cognitive shifts – helping others to see beyond current practices.

Key PD Practices in Schools and Districts…

2. Naming and shaping a larger identity that supports boundary crossing

Key PD Practices in Schools and Districts….

3. Engaging in dialogue about differences; creating multiple overlapping shared leadership environments with community

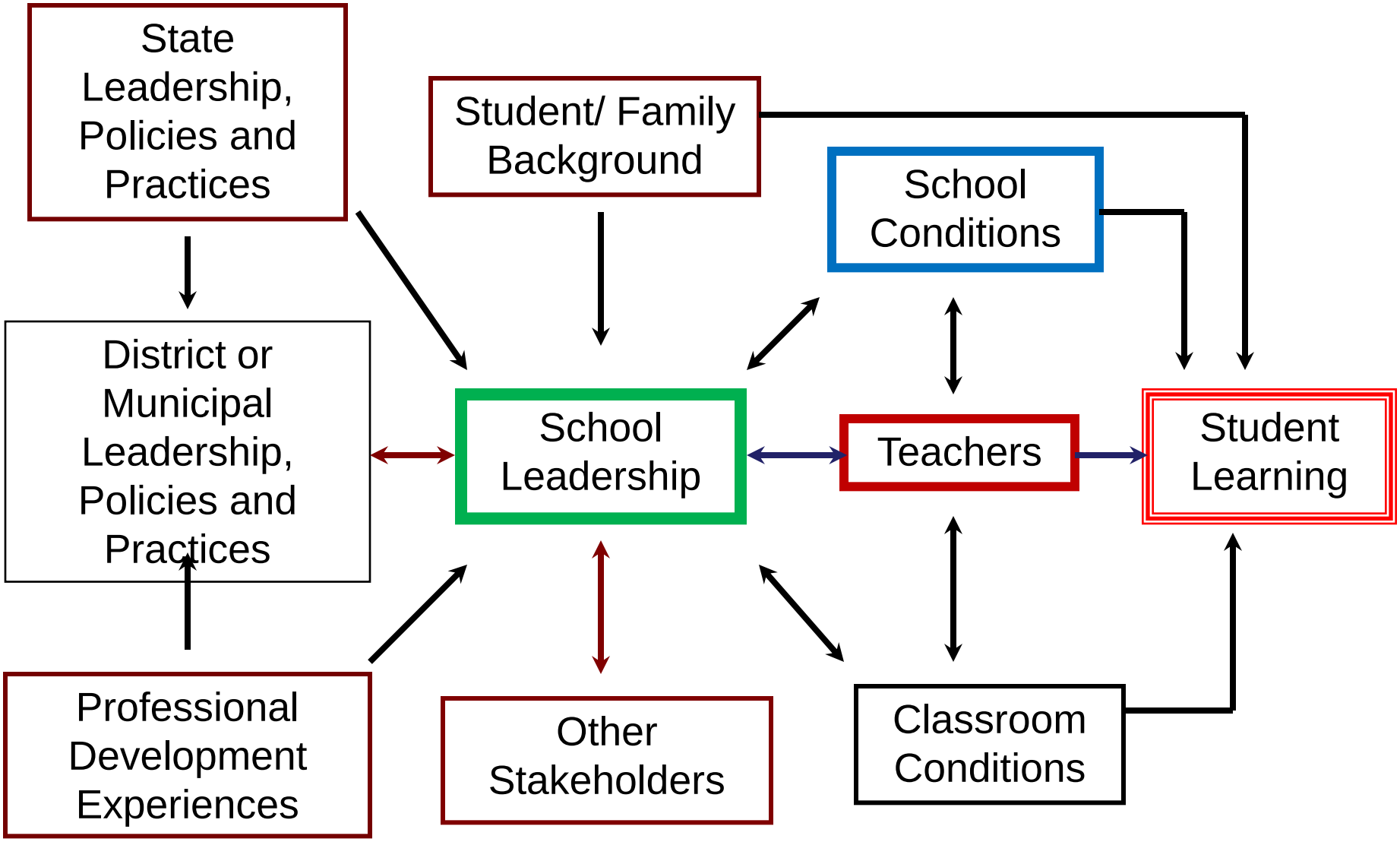
Key PD Practices in Schools and Districts….

4. Creating equitable governance mechanisms – using policy to promote inclusion around important questions and tasks.

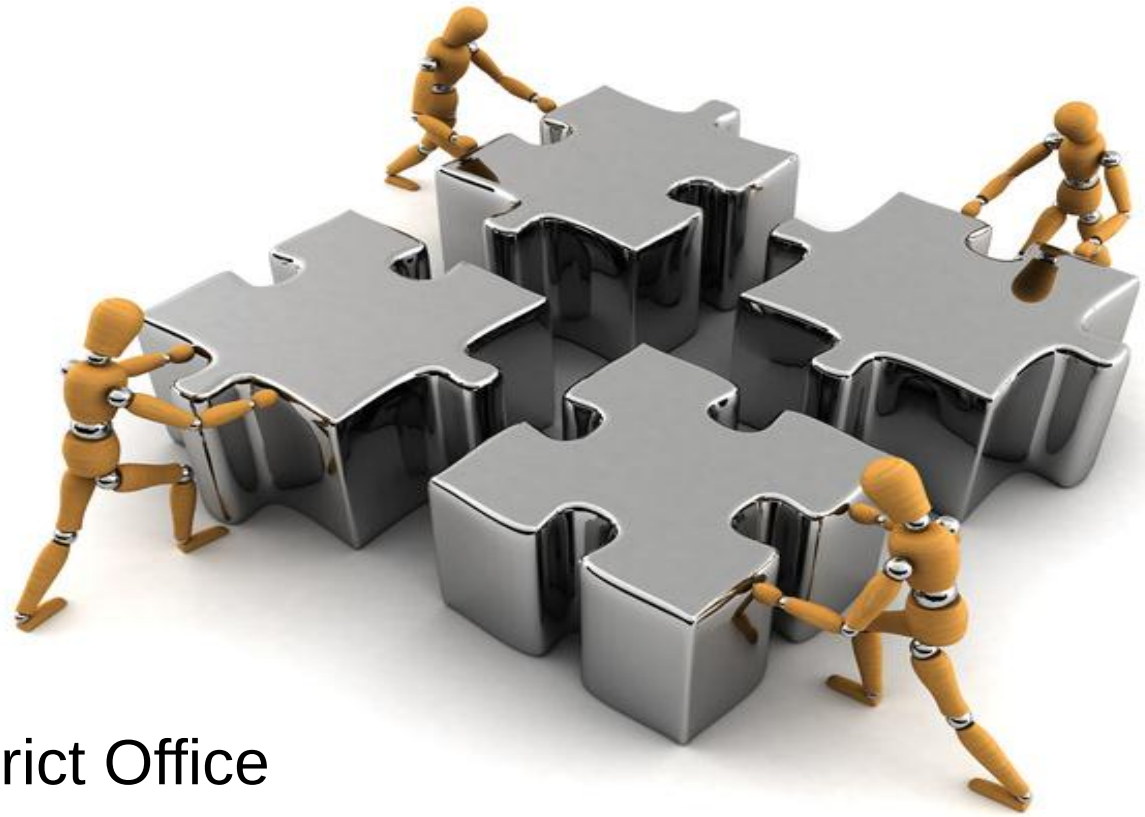
Key PD Practices in Schools and Districts….

5. Cementing boundary-crossing through interpersonal relationships

Source of Ideas about Integrative Leadership in Education



Parents and Community



Principals

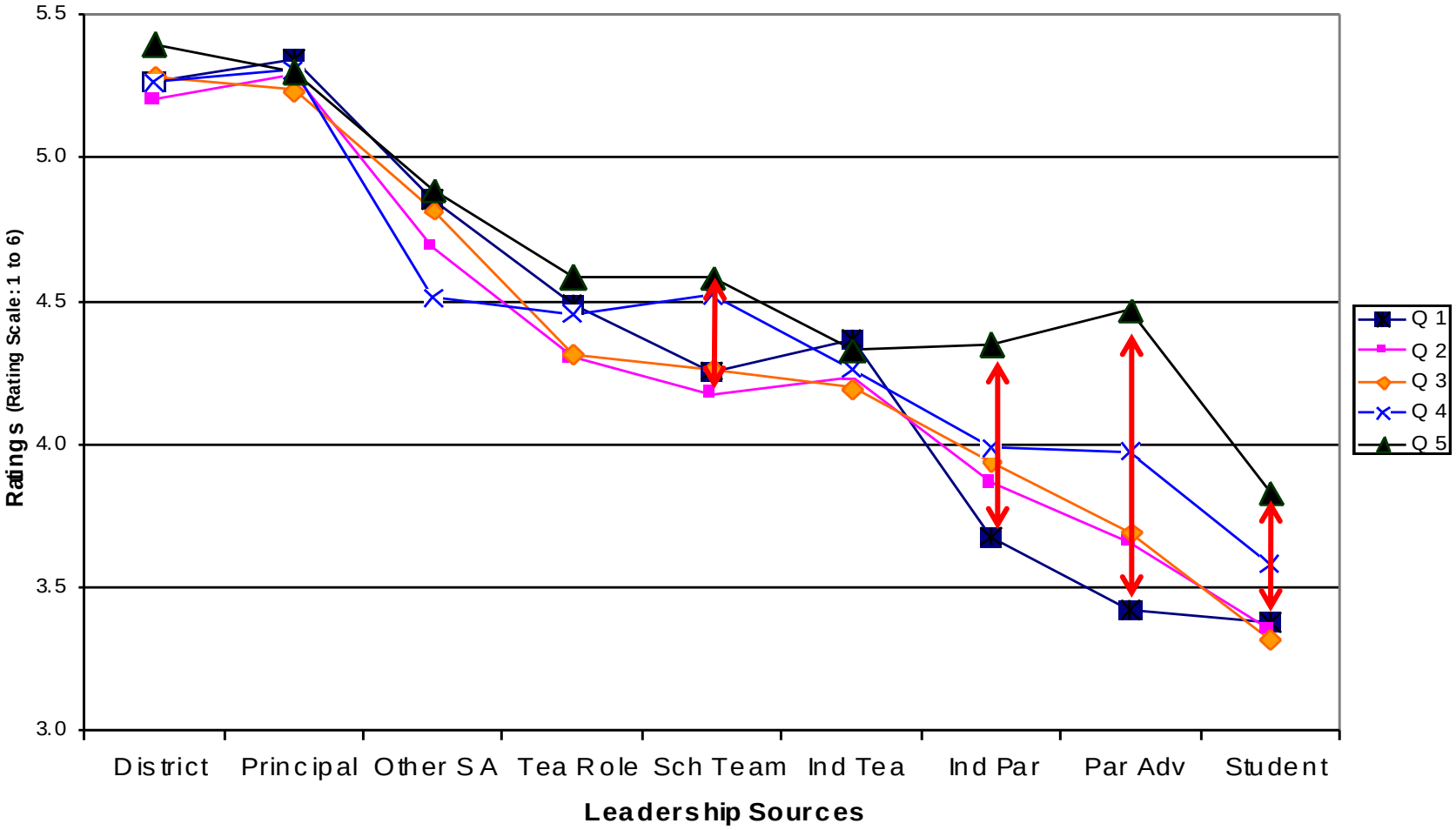
District Office

Teachers

Community Engagement Starts with the District

District policies that promoted engagement increased participation from diverse stakeholders.

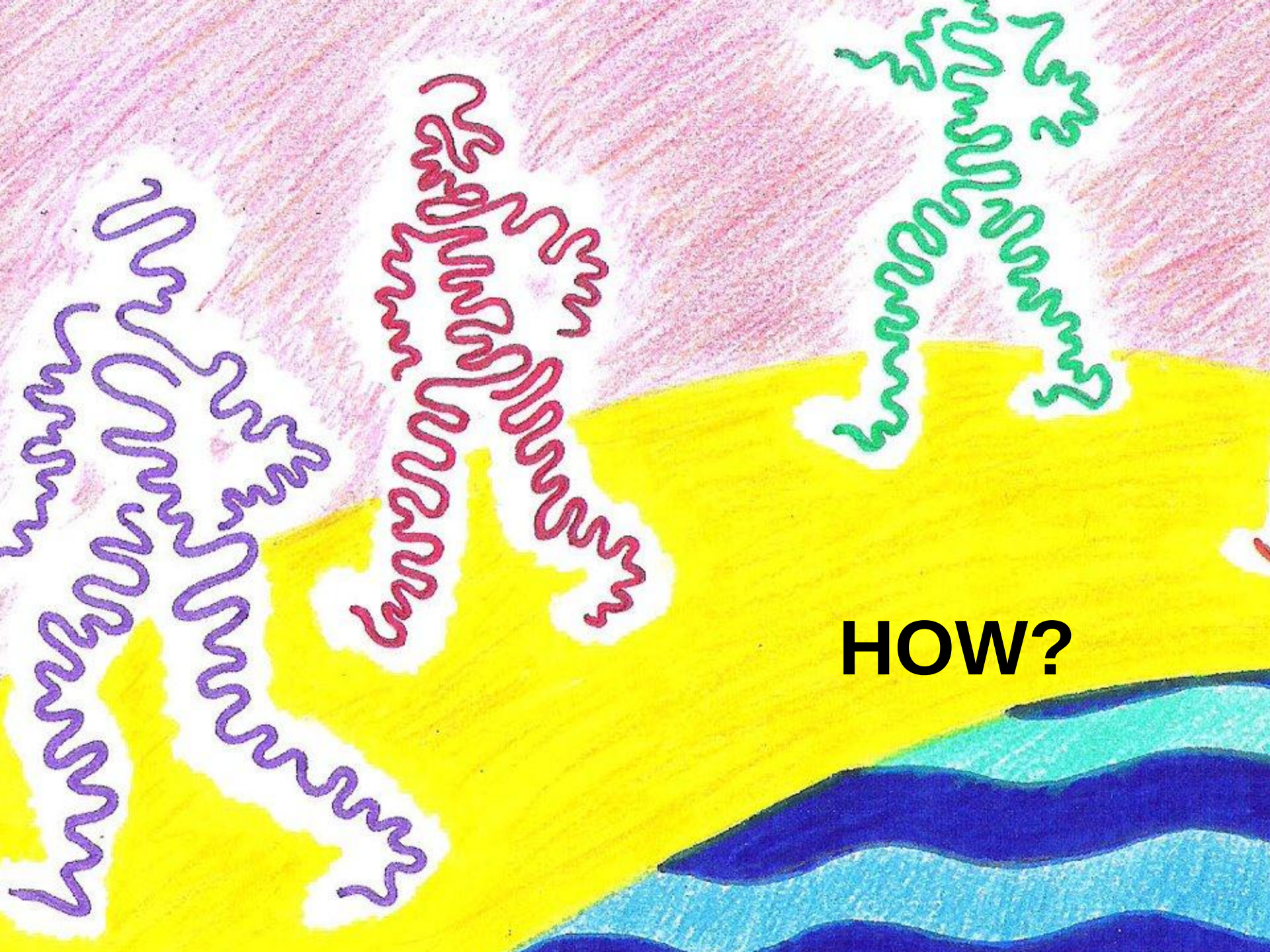
Where it is not a superintendent priority, principals generally avoid it.



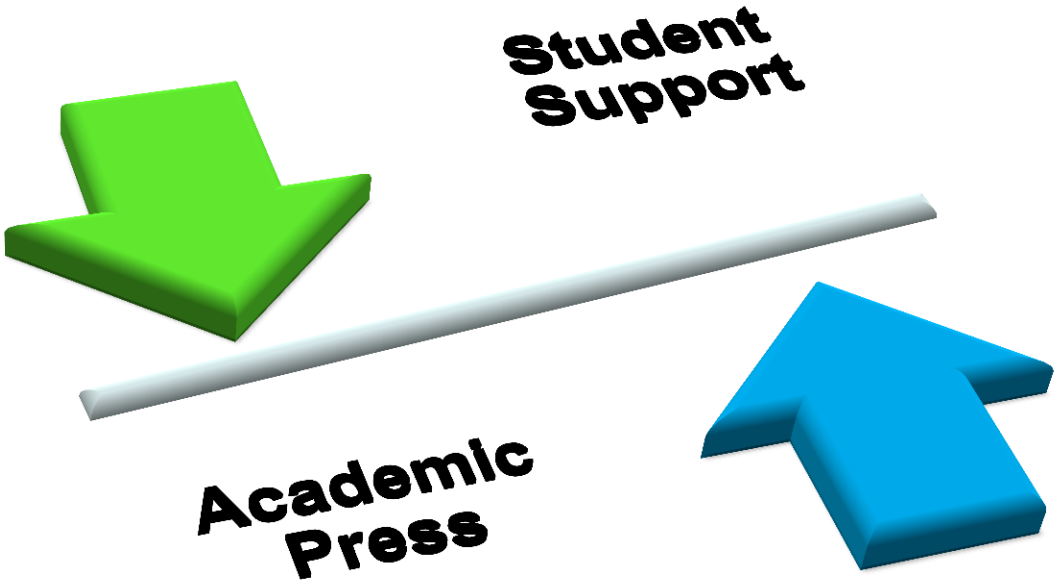
IN SUM: Schools are still bureaucracies but effective boundary-crossing cultures help to ensure effectiveness.

WHO ADVOCATES FOR PARENT AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN YOUR KOMMUN?

WHAT COULD OR SHOULD YOU DO?

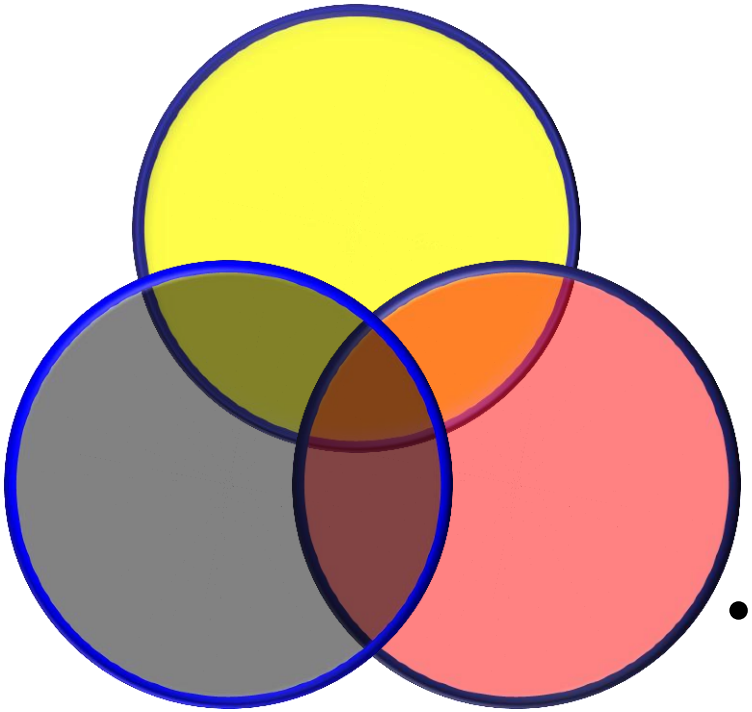

HOW?

How We Work With Students



HOW ADULTS WORK TOGETHER

- *Professional Community*



- *Trust*
- *Organizational Learning*

How We Create an OL Culture

Cooperative Culture

- Strong, mutually reinforcing exchanges and linkages between teachers and departments
- Policies, procedures, standards, and tasks are designed to encourage teamwork and camaraderie
- Teachers think of themselves as “owners” rather than employees.

Adaptive Culture

- The school actively monitors the environment
- Policies and practices support the school’s ability to respond to opportunities or avoid threats
- Members take risks and experiment
- Teachers and Leaders actively engage the community.

Let’s Not Fool Ourselves…

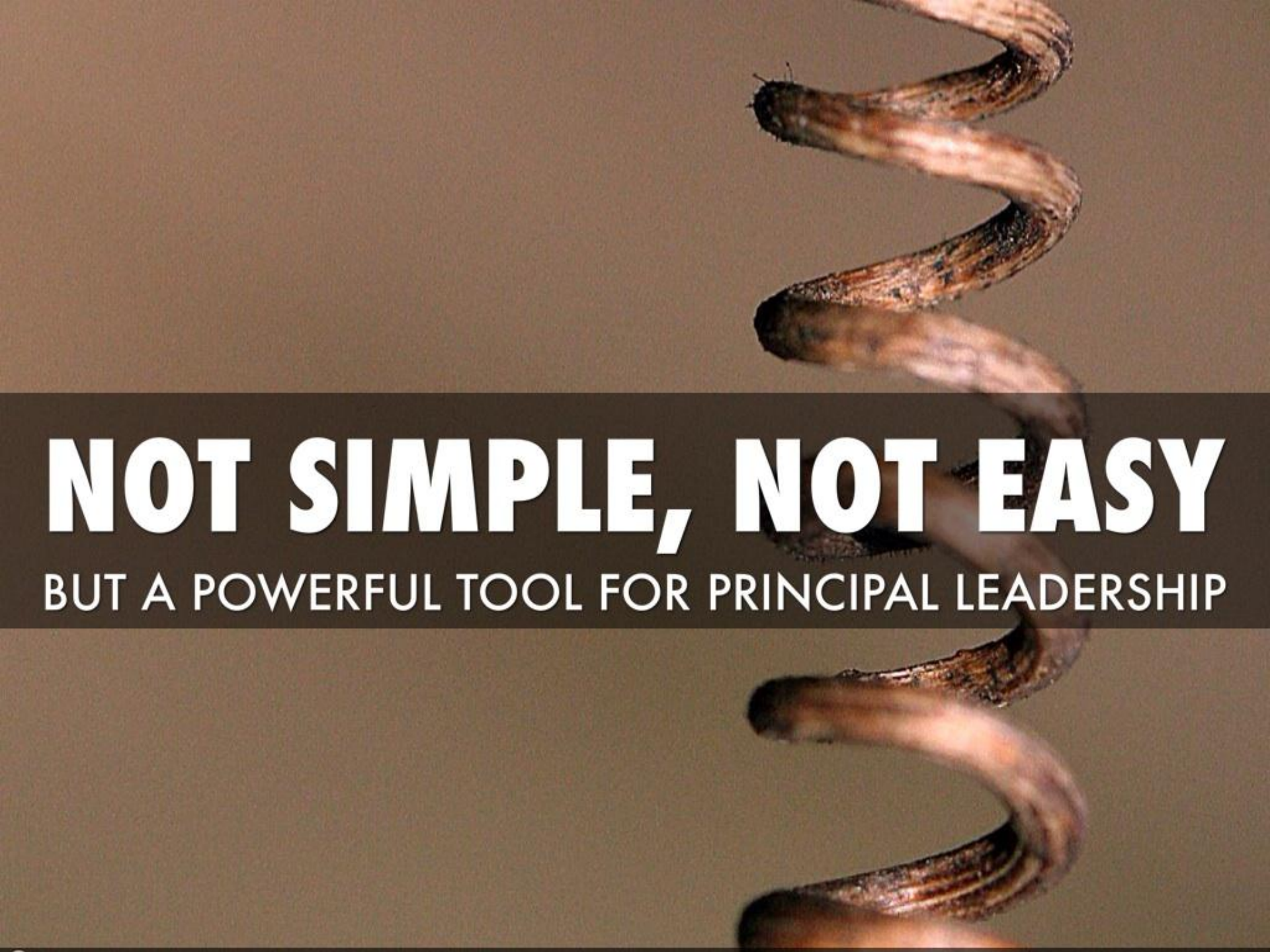
“I thought I felt a paradigm shift, but it was just my undershorts riding up.”

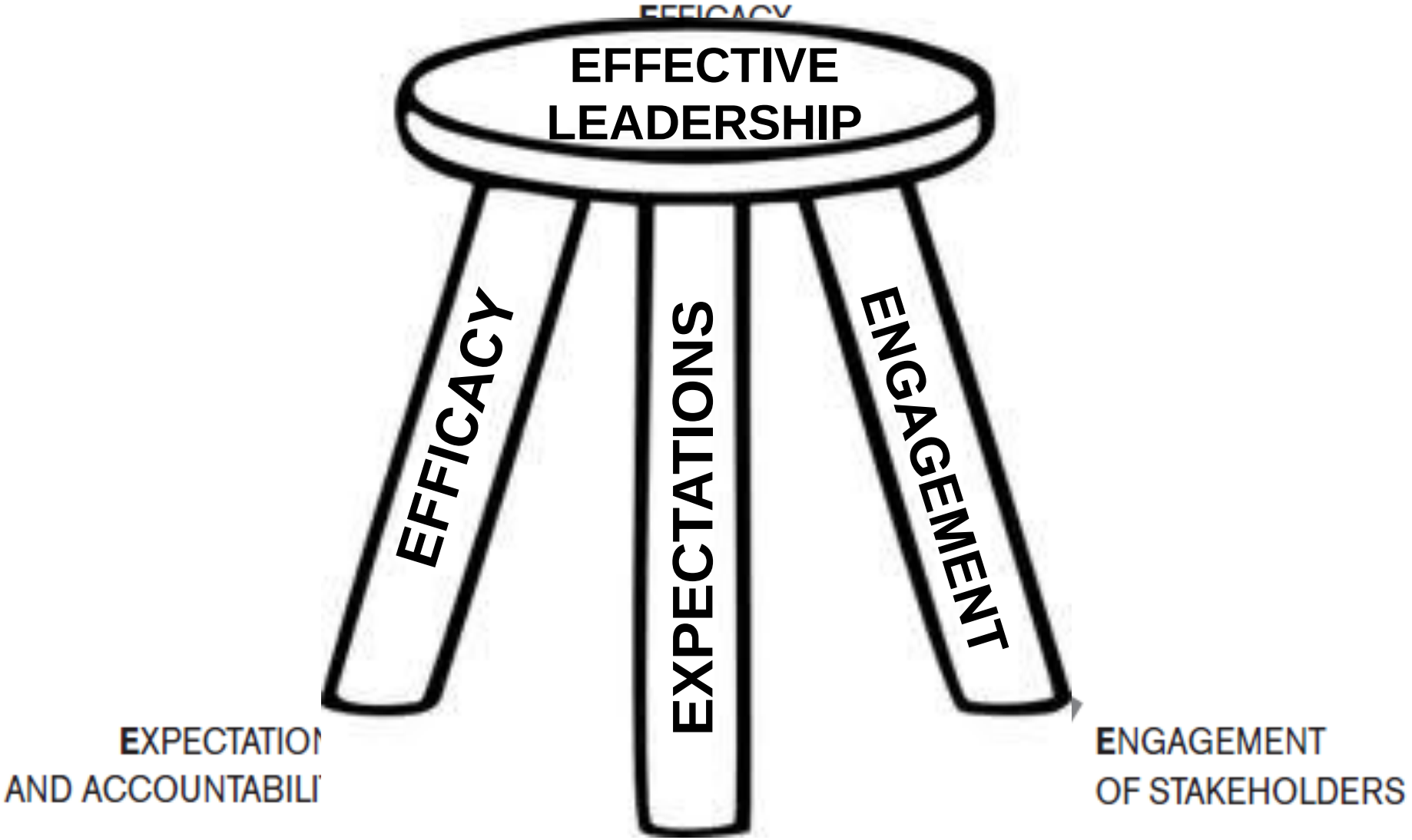
Or Hope for Quick Fixes

Or Expect Stability..

A Reminder….

- School Improvement is more likely to require “steady work” than silver bullets;
- Culture is hard to change;
- Professional and school development programs need to keep an eye on the long-term social benefits – but remain adaptive.


NOT SIMPLE, NOT EASY
BUT A POWERFUL TOOL FOR PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP


EFFECTIVE
LEADERSHIP
EFFICACY
EXPECTATIONS
ENGAGEMENT
EXPECTATIO
AND ACCOUNTABILI
ENGAGEMENT
OF STAKEHOLDERS

Project Publications

Final Report/Executive Summary:

- http://www.cehd.umn.edu/CAREI/
- http://www.wallacefoundation.org

Additional analysis included in:

- Leithwood, K. & Louis, K.S. (2011) *Linking leadership to student learning*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Over 50 published papers (available on request): **klouis@umn.edu**

Learning from Leadership

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