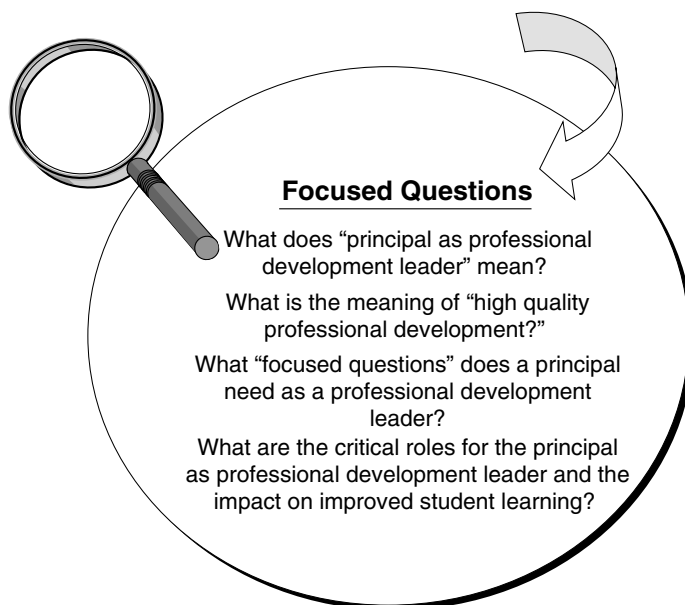C H A P T E R   O N E

What It Means to Be a Professional Development Leader

Learning and leadership are inextricably intertwined.

—John F. Kennedy

Focused Questions

What does "principal as professional development leader" mean?

What is the meaning of "high quality professional development?"

What "focused questions" does a principal need as a professional development leader?

What are the critical roles for the principal as professional development leader and the impact on improved student learning?

Principal's Scenario

Juanita Sanchez, principal of Chavez School, is driving back from the district office August kickoff meeting for the new school year. As she drives, she thinks of all the dilemmas, demands, and challenges that face her as principal this year from the district, teachers, students, parents, and school community. As she arrives at the school parking lot, she can't help but reflect on the last school year and the lost days of summer when she was going to get so much done. The district office meeting inspired her, but she thinks, now the real work starts here at her own school! She decides to walk around the school, visit a few classrooms and check out the building and grounds before returning to her office.

As she enters the hallways of the school, she asks herself, "What is the most important thing I could do as principal to help raise student achievement and support my teachers in this effort?" Also, "How can I help teachers increase their success with each student, thus improving classroom and schoolwide achievement?" Before the busy demands of the school year starts, Juanita really wants to get focused by dealing with the district office mandates, schoolwide goals, and individual needs of her teachers, students, and school community. She stops and imagines the classrooms, hallways, and school grounds with teachers and students who are well prepared and achieving at high standards rather than being the lowest-performing school in the district. Out loud, she asks, "How do we get there?" Just as the words come out of her mouth, a veteran teacher pops out of his classroom and sees Juanita.

Mike: Juanita, what do you mean how do we get there? You look concerned. Is there something the matter?

Juanita: (surprised, but glad to see Mike): I've just returned from the district office kickoff meeting, and the list is endless of what needs to be done. I was just picturing the school as high achieving and asking how to achieve it this year.

Mike: Well, we've got a good start with our leadership team, but I think we are missing a process that lasts more than a few weeks, month, or a year. We know what we want. We just need to determine clearly how we will do it rather than keep

changing with every new demand and confusing our teachers and parents.

Juanita: What do you mean by "process"?

Mike: It seems to me we need a process that helps us as teachers at Chavez better meet the student needs.

Juanita: You know, you just sparked something that I believe deeply about after all the past practices and research I've experienced. First, I know I can't do it all. I need teachers, parents, and the school community support. Second, professional development matters most to support teachers, and I don't mean the old "sit and get" inservices. Mike, you're right, a sustained professional development process, which meets the needs for increasing student learning and achievement, is the critical piece. We need to sharpen our focus to do this.

Mike: Wow! I thought I was just fixing my classroom up for the start of school. Now I think the leadership team and staff should discuss a professional development process that empowers us to design what learning needs we have based on our student and school achievement needs. Maybe this will really sustain the change we've always been talking about.

Juanita: Yes and we're going to do it together because I know if teachers continue to learn, grow, and succeed, student achievement will soar. We can't keep doing the same things in the same way because we know what we've gotten. Learning, grappling, practicing, and reflecting on our own growth as professionals and as a school will make the difference. This year and each day forward, we're going to work together to focus our learning efforts. Thanks for sharing your thoughts and hearing my wondering out loud.

Mike: We'll see, and I hope for best! Let me know how we can help! Professional development, huh! I wonder what Janet, as the teacher's union rep, will say about this? How do we know what really works in professional development?

> *Juanita:* The leadership team will get a call today to set up a meeting to discuss the professional development process, and I want you to share your insights. We need to get an early start so we can share and get input from the faculty at our first-of-the-year meeting. I'm excited. Now I'd like to see what you've been doing to your room, and thanks again, a principal needs to share.

INTRODUCTION

Will schools change to meet the critical goal of our society for well-educated, productive citizens? If so, America needs well-informed principals to focus on ensuring high-quality educational experiences for all students. This means improving the instruction in every classroom. It is no longer a luxury to conduct professional development in our schools. Professional development is an essential and job-embedded component of any school improvement effort. It is a key leverage point for sustainable change in our schools, and it should be a way of life within every school. For high-quality professional development to occur at the site, the principal has a critical leadership role.

Teacher knowledge and its correlation to continued professional growth are the most significant factors relating to student success (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Elmore (2002c) says that the "Achilles' heel" of education today is the great variability between classrooms within a school. As the instructional leaders, principals are compelled to provide the type of support necessary to address that variability. In addition, more and more teachers are entering the classrooms underprepared for the realities of providing quality education in today's world. Barth (1990) reinforces this with the statement that "nothing within a school has more impact on students in terms of skills development, self-confidence, or classroom behaviors than the personal and professional growth of their teachers" (p. 49). The professional learning of teachers is a central factor in determining the quality of teaching (Sparks, 2002). If principals expect to close the achievement gap for students, then principals must have a deeper understanding of what it takes to improve teaching and learning.

According to DuFour (2003), effective leaders take action. They do not wait for everything to fall into place, because they truly understand that the learning that occurs in a "professional learning

community" happens during the course of the action. This book is designed to assist principals in taking appropriate action to implement and sustain effective schoolwide professional development.

Recently, the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) revised its standards for professional development (2001). Based on the premises that improved learning for all students is the goal and that the main difference between learning and not learning is the quality of the teaching (Barth, 1990; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Sparks, 2002), these standards provide the floor upon which a solid professional development program can be built. The 12 standards are divided into the categories of context, process, and content. The NSDC standards are embedded throughout this book for principals to deepen their understanding of their meaning and use. Chapter 2 will provide a more complete view of the NSDC standards.

> What does "principal as professional
> development leader" mean?

For principals to best develop the vision of quality education for all students, they must have a clear understanding, as well as the skills and abilities, to help lead professional development efforts within their schools. Educational researchers view professional development as the *key leverage point* for providing opportunities for continuously improved educational practices by teachers and staff to obtain higher student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 1997; David & Shields, 2001; Elmore, 2002a; Lieberman, 1995a; Sparks & Hirsh, 1997). School improvement happens when a school develops a professional learning community that focuses on standards, achievement, student work, and changing teaching practices. According to Fullan (1999), a principal and school trying to improve must think of professional development as a cornerstone strategy.

Professional development creates the change necessary to continually improve the teachers' practices that will close the achievement gap. This chapter will provide the overview as well as the meaning to the importance of the principal as a professional development leader within the school. The principal-as-professional-development-leader model presents a lens for understanding the framework of the book (see Figure 1.1).

As the model shows, the principal must have a *clear focus on improving student learning and achievement.* To reach this goal, continuous professional development within the school provides the *context,*

Figure 1.1   Principal as Professional Development Leader: Building Capacity for Improving Student Achievement

**School
Learning Community**

Shared Leadership

ROLES
Builder
Designer
Implementer
Reflective
Leader

TOOLS

**Principal as Professional
Development
Leader**

**Professional
Development
Focused Questions**

• **Context**
• **Process**
• **Content**

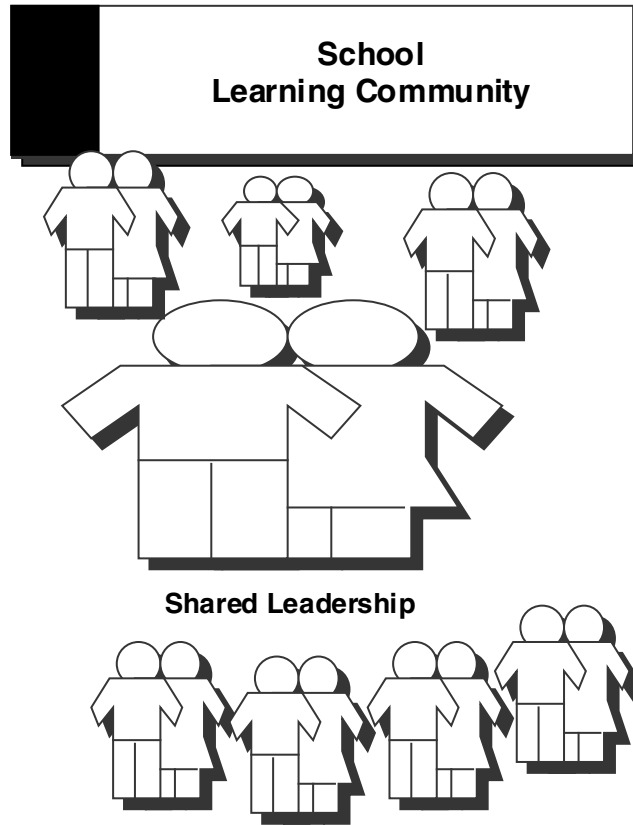**Focus
Improving
Student
Achievement**
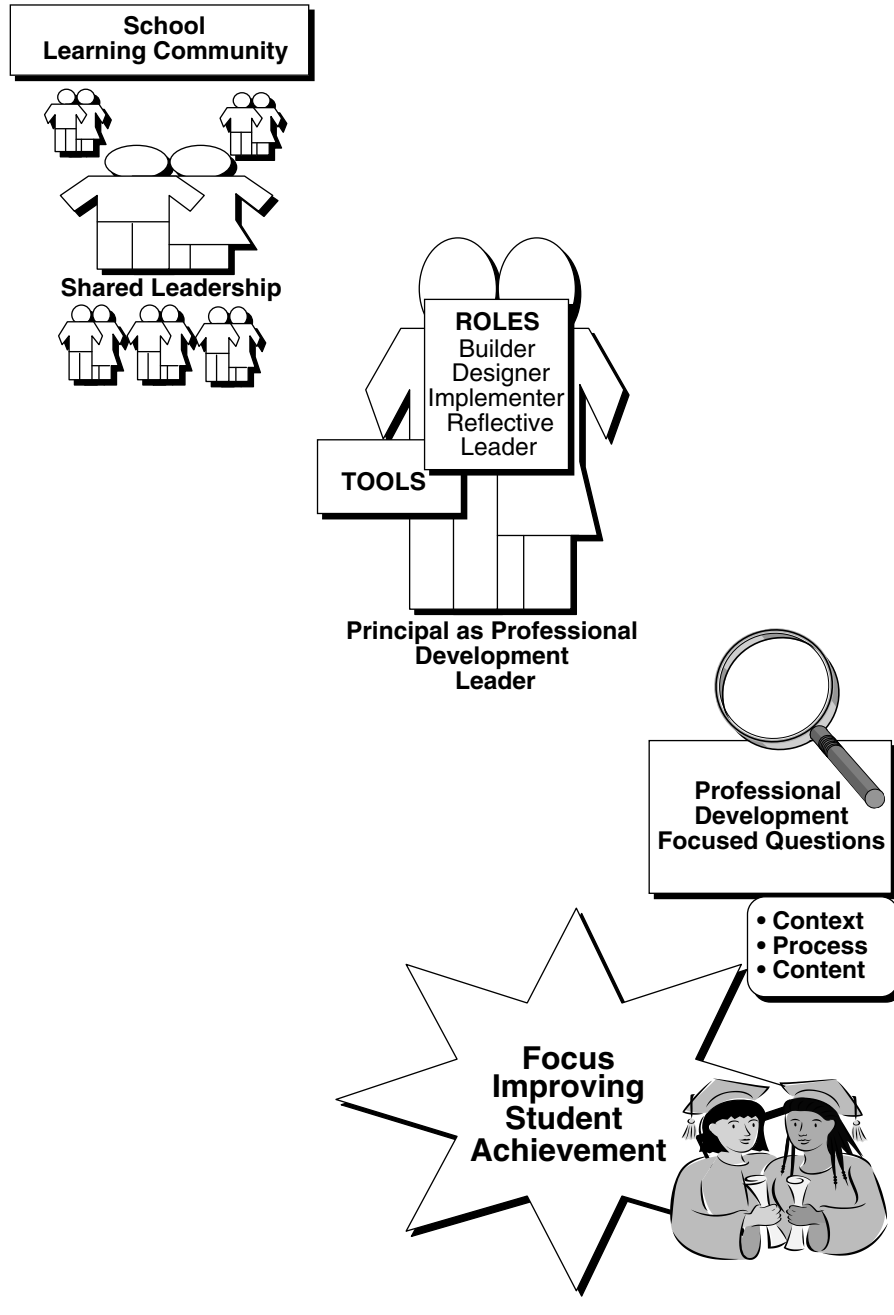
Figure 1.2   Shared Leadership—School Learning Community

process, and content that helps create the changes in teacher classroom practices and school culture. Principals must possess the ability to ask themselves *focused questions* to guide their thinking and responses that help keep professional development on track. The school learning community, through *shared leadership* and ownership with the principal, sets the direction and carries out the professional development work (see Figure 1.2). The principal is not the sole leader of professional development, since it is imperative that leadership be shared within the school learning community. As Lambert (2002) puts it, "The days of the principal as the lone instructional leader are over. We no longer believe that one administrator can serve as the instructional leader for an entire school without the substantial participation of other educators" (p. 37).

SHARED LEADERSHIP

Shared leadership is a key component of a professional learning community. Having everyone involved in the work of the school not only creates team thinking but also provides the forum for the best thinkers to consider the intractable issues of education. It turns the lonely "I" into the productive "We." The task of the principal as professional development leader is to make this professional learning community happen as a shared school community undertaking. The premise of this book is that leadership and professional development are the work of everyone in the school, with the principal assuming the shared leadership roles of *Builder, Designer, Implementer,* and *Reflective Leader* to create the professional development frames that make a difference in student achievement. A variety of *tools* are available that a principal and school can use to implement powerful professional development experiences and build capacity. Chapter 2 further explores how to build a professional learning community. The old model of one-person leadership leaves out the tremendous talents of teachers and does not have the sustainability if the principal leaves (Lambert, 2002).

More than a decade ago, Barth encouraged principals to cast aside the notion of principals as the authority and "knower" and to become learners alongside the teachers and students. His term for this type of principal is the "Lead Learner" (Barth, 1990, 2001). Learning together creates a community that is dedicated to sharing and discovering what works well.

Sharing leadership is a challenge for many principals. For example, in one school, a teacher attending a principal-led faculty meeting, shortly after returning from a week's stint as a reader and scorer of a national exam, listened while the principal explained that there would be changes to the national test but that there was no information available regarding the changes. The teacher proceeded to tell the staff what the new changes would be, since they were provided at the scoring session. The principal became visibly annoyed, and the teacher, embarrassed, quickly stopped sharing her expert knowledge. Later, she wondered why it was so difficult for this principal to allow anyone else to be an expert. As this scenario demonstrates, shared leadership must be a part of the school culture to be inclusive and effective. In schools that have built a learning community, everyone acknowledges the need to learn together, and that means everyone can participate as the "teacher" or the "learner" on one topic or another. If the meeting agenda was too packed to continue with

the discussion of the changes in the national exam, the principal could have acknowledged the teacher's expertise and recent experience as scorer of the exam and scheduled the discussion for another time.

Elmore (2000) describes this complex nature of instructional practice as requiring people to operate in networks of shared and complementary expertise rather than in hierarchies that have a clearly defined division of labor. Professional knowledge and practice get stretched across roles rather than being inherent in one role or another. By placing the responsibility of professional development within the school through a shared leadership model, more ownership is developed, and action is taken to improve areas of concern and build on achievements. Developing the professional capacity within the school means collaborative leadership and shared professional work. It is this kind of ongoing investment in the professional development of teachers and leaders that provides sustainable school improvement.

In addition to the shared responsibility to professional development, educators are responsible for their own learning. The individual and the school community of learners need to take action to keep themselves professionally current to meet the needs of the ever-changing diverse student population. This fundamental belief holds that as a school learning community, we are responsible for directing our learning as collaborative colleagues. Darling-Hammond (1997) states:

> When all is said and done, what matters most for students' learning are the commitments and capacities of their teachers. Teaching for understanding cannot be produced solely by spending more money or by requiring that schools use specific texts or curriculum packages, and it cannot be driven by mandating new tests, even better ones. Although things like standards, funding, and management are essential supports, the sine qua non of education is whether teachers know how to make complex subjects accessible to diverse learners and whether they can work in partnership with parents and other educators to support children's development. If only a few teachers have this capacity, most schools will never be able to produce better education for the full range of students who attend them. Widespread success depends on the development of a professional base of knowledge along with a commitment to the success of all students (pp. 293–294).

The traditional view of professional development is prescribed inservice with individual expectations. In a learning community, everyone is responsible for his or her own learning as well as that of colleagues. In this book, we have used terms such as *collaboration* and *collegial.* We attempt to define terms within the context of the text; however, these two terms seem to capture different meanings for different people, so we wish to address them. Common definitions of collaboration in schools are "working together" and "teamwork." The term collegial is a bit more difficult to define. We support Warren Little's effort to describe collegiality in schools through a list of behaviors:

Adults talk about practice

Adults observe each other

Adults engage together in work on curriculum

Adults teach each other what they know about teaching, learning and leading.

(cited in Barth, 1990, p. 31)

What is the meaning of
high-quality professional development?

REDEFINING THE MEANING OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

What does the term *professional development* mean? Professional development is a lifelong, collaborative learning process that nourishes the growth of individuals, teams, and the school through a daily, job-embedded, learner-centered, focused approach. It emerges from and meets the learning needs of participants as well as clearly focuses on improving student learning. Professional development is not something that is done to individuals or faculties on a periodic basis as new mandates or educational fads appear. It is an ongoing sustainable process (see Figure 1.3) that builds collaboration, generates and shares professional knowledge, uses current research, and informs the daily work of teachers and leaders (Darling-Hammond,

Figure 1.3   Professional Development Cycle
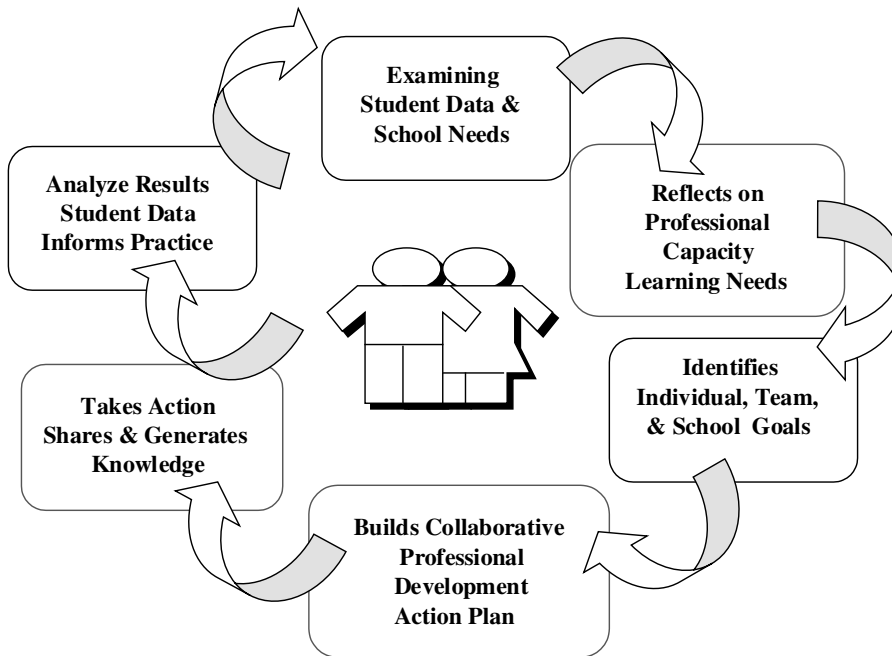
1997; Elmore, 2002a; Stigler & Hiebert, 1999). This emphasis on continuous improvement of professional practices is vital to a true understanding of professional development in our schools by principals. Professional development becomes an integrated part of the daily work within the school. It is not seen as an add-on or a mandated requirement, but rather as professional practice of honing knowledge to better serve the learning process of both adults and students. It is an ongoing renewal process that permeates the professional learning community culture.

Improved student achievement will occur with well-informed, highly qualified teachers using effective strategies. We can no longer afford to maintain the status quo and should heed the old adage that "if you keep doing the same thing in the same ways, you get the same results." The principal must understand the critical role professional development plays in bringing about change in instructional practice. The power of professional development is a critical leverage point for sustained change that will provide the means to produce the expected results of improved student achievement.

IMPORTANCE OF HIGH-QUALITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Elmore (2002b) provides us with an important insight about the structures of schools and why professional learning is not clearly conceived by educators when he states:

> People who work in schools do not pay attention to the connection between how they organize and manage themselves and how they take care of their own and their students' learning. The structure and resources of the organization are like wallpaper—after living with the same wallpaper for a certain number of years, people cease to see it.
>
> In the present political and social environment of schooling, this lack of attention is dangerous and irresponsible. Schools are under pressure for increased accountability for student learning, and too many educators cannot account for the basic elements of their organization and how these elements affect the learning that teachers and students engage in. Further, most educators would argue that they need more resources to do the work they are being asked to do under these new accountability systems. But why give more resources to an organization whose leaders cannot explain how they are using the resources that they already have? (pp. 22–23)

Professional development typically is used to carry out a school reform agenda. Yet despite the considerable resources that most schools devote to professional development (6 to 10 days per year is not unusual), teachers and administrators alike generally have negative opinions of professional development practices. Most educators view professional development as an ad hoc, disconnected series of one-time activities that have little or no impact on improving student learning or the school culture in general.

High-quality professional development is a means to help reculture the school and improve practice. A principal as a professional development leader must understand deeply how changes take place in the structure and culture of the school organization and create a culture that understands and values high-quality professional development. It is hard work to redirect schools toward a common vision of high expectations for all students, strengthen academic curricula, tailor instruction to students' interests and life experiences, and carry

Figure 1.4 High-Quality Professional Development Key Components
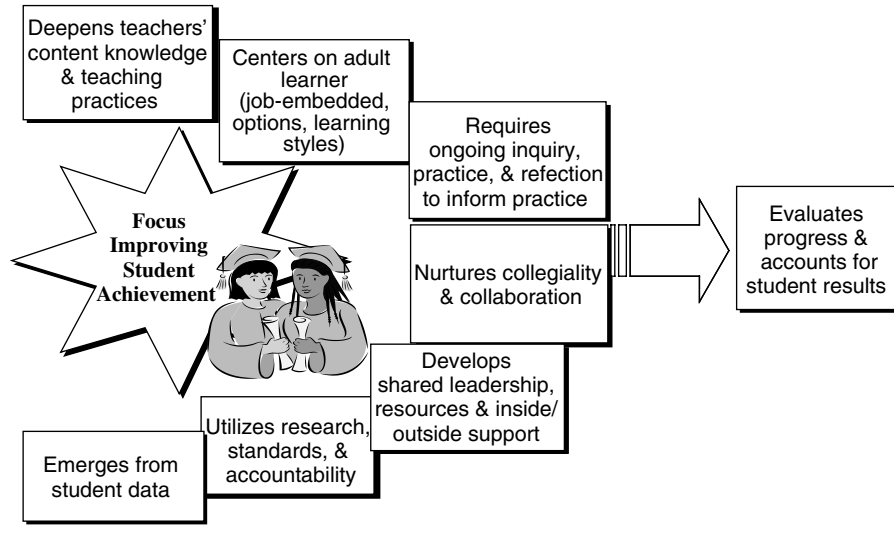
out multiple assessment measures of students' progress. This book is designed to provide tools for dealing with these issues. Chapter 2 specifically provides guidance for the change process and reculturing the school.

High-quality professional development should contain nine key components if it is to make a focused and sustained difference in altering the culture and structures of the school to provide a process for continuous improvement (see Figure 1.4).

HIGH-QUALITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMPONENTS

- Focuses on learning and sustaining improved student learning
- Emerges from student data and the need to improve student results
- Nurtures collegiality and collaboration among teachers, other staff, and principal
- Develops shared leadership, resources, and inside/outside support

- Utilizes research with a foundation in standards and accountability
- Deepens teachers' content knowledge and teaching practices
- Centers on the adult learner through job-embedded work, options, and learning styles
- Requires ongoing inquiry, practice, and reflection to inform practice
- Evaluates progress and accounts for student learning by examining results (Elmore, 2002a; Guskey, 2000; Sparks, 2002; Sparks & Hirsh, 1997; Speck & Knipe, 2001)

The primary goal of a leader for professional development is to focus on and sustain a well-conceived plan for school improvement that reflects these key components. The outcome for this plan is improved student learning, and improved teacher learning can achieve that. Each key component will be addressed here briefly as an overview and will be treated more thoroughly in specific chapters.

Focuses on Learning and Sustaining Improved Student Learning

Professional development is clearly about the learning and improvements in teaching techniques, strategies, and understanding of content that occur after preservice training. Learning is always occurring and is a self-renewing process for the learner. It is the nature of humans. Unfortunately, learning can involve faulty assumption, poor habits, lack of current knowledge, and other undesirable traits that may need to be addressed in a comprehensive, cohesive, and aligned plan. A focus on student learning identifies the needs and direction for the plan. The mantra for school improvement is "How will what we are doing affect student achievement?"

Emerges From Student Data and the Need to Improve Student Results

As teachers, the principal, and the school community analyze schoolwide and individual classroom data, specific areas of concern are identified. Through inquiry into student work and results, there emerges targeted need areas. The experience of examining results and learning together creates a collegial commitment to professional

development that is relevant and contextual (Lieberman & Miller, 1999).

Nurtures Collegiality and Collaboration Among Teachers, Other Staff, and the Principal

Professional development must be founded on a sense of collegiality and collaboration among teachers, other staff, and the principal, which becomes the essence of the school culture. A collaborative culture nurtures collegial work and supports an atmosphere of sharing professional knowledge and grappling with tough student achievement and learning issues. Isolation within a single classroom does not work. The richness of colleagues inquiring into practice, trying new strategies (practicing, modeling, coaching each other, and reflecting on practice), and examining results exemplifies the real meaning of continuing to develop as a professional. Professional development is not done to individuals or groups. It is collaboratively created out of engaging colleagues around real learning issues that exist within their classrooms and school. The goals and direction for professional development emerge from colleagues recognizing the needs and issues. The culture of collegiality and collaboration gives each teacher and principal the ongoing support needed as changes in teaching practices and content take place (Barth, 1990; Elmore, 2002b; Little, 1993). Professional teachers act as true colleagues who collaboratively meet, share, inquire, research, practice, and reflect on teaching and learning. Out of the intensive work a principal and teachers do as collaborative colleagues, a new form of professionalism emerges that clearly links leading and learning.

Develops Shared Leadership, Resources, and Inside/Outside Support

Shared leadership in professional development allows a broader understanding, ownership, and continuous focus on the critical issues that need to be addressed. Without shared leadership, professional growth plans are fragmented and episodic with little focus or direction. Principals can help schools focus their efforts by using appropriate resources and inside/outside support. These are powerful means to help carry out professional development plans. Looking inside as well as outside of the school for support, including research,

expertise, and best practices, helps nourish and infuse the professional growth opportunities.

Utilizes Research With a Foundation in Standards and Accountability

Professional development can no longer be based on what educators think might work but is not substantiated by research. A research-based plan of action grounded in the standards provides a foundation for credible professional work. Accountability for actions and results brings meaning to the continuous improvement efforts. If professional development is to be of value, then it must demonstrate clear achievements of outcomes (Guskey, 2000). Research-based professional development bridges the gap between standards and achievement (Elmore, 2002a). Recent federal legislation enacting the No Child Left Behind initiative (2001) mandates this kind of professional development.

Deepens Teachers' Content Knowledge and Teaching Practices

Deepening teachers' understanding of specific content knowledge enables teachers to know their subject matter well and provides opportunities to improve instructional and assessment strategies. Using professional development with content-specific knowledge gives teachers rich experiences in what they are teaching as well as integrating the strategies of how they deliver the content. If teachers do not know their content area well, they lack the ability to create learning experiences for students that meet high standards and expectations for learning (Darling-Hammond, 1997).

Centers on Adult Learner Through Job-Embedded Work, Options, and Learning Styles

Professional development efforts have moved away from district-provided, general informational workshops to job-embedded, local-context learning opportunities where options and understanding about the learner and learning style are evident. What is required at each school site to improve student learning must be centered on what the teacher needs to know and be able to do. This learner-centered practice engages teachers in grappling with their daily practice and offers teachers options based on their own learning needs and styles of learning (Sparks, 2002). Honoring the developmental

levels and experiences of teachers as they tackle specific classroom and subject matter learning issues gives meaning to ongoing job-embedded daily professional growth (Speck & Knipe, 2001).

Requires Ongoing Inquiry, Practice, and Reflection to Inform Practice

Ongoing inquiry, practice, and reflection to inform practice are critical if professional growth is to be sustained and integrated into daily classroom practices that make a difference for student achievement. A cycle of inquiry into practice by examining student work and results data creates a school culture that continuously reflects on practice (Center for Research on the Context of Teaching, 2002; Sagor, 2000). It is this ability to study, act, and inform practice that provides ongoing focus on the critical teaching and learning issues. Professional development is seen as a daily facet of teachers' real work rather than presented as an episodic, one-time event that is soon forgotten and rarely affects the learning within the school (Elmore, 2002a; Sparks, 2002). By its nature, inquiry into practice is focused on striving for continuous improvement and the means to reach that goal.

Evaluates Progress and Accounts for Student Learning by Examining Results

Evaluation of professional development as a means of making progress toward improved student achievement results is essential. Knowing whether the professional growth that is taking place is worthy of the efforts is a critical aspect of accountability. Evaluating professional development points to what needs to be done or changed (Guskey, 2000). Continuing to do professional development activities that do not generate improved student learning is ineffective. An evaluation process must be in place. The crucial questions here are What is making a difference in student achievement? How do we know? How does this evaluation process inform our current practices and cycle of improvement?
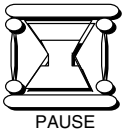
A principal needs to keep these critical components of high-quality professional development clearly in mind when sharing leadership and the development of professional learning plans. Table 1.1 provides a quick checklist a principal can use for developing, implementing, and reviewing a professional development plan.

Next, if we are to have high-quality professional development, principals must look at the questions they ask.

Table 1.1   Principal's Checklist of High-Quality Professional
Development Components

High-Quality Professional Development Components
Principal's Checklist
for
Planning Professional Development

- Focuses on learning and sustaining improved student learning
- Emerges from student data and the needs to improve student results
- Nurtures collegiality and collaboration among teachers, other staff, and principal
- Develops shared leadership, resources, and inside/outside support
- Utilizes research with a foundation in standards and accountability
- Deepens teachers' content knowledge and teaching practices
- Centers on adult learner through job-embedded work, options, and learning styles
- Requires ongoing inquiry, practice, and reflection to inform practice
- Evaluates progress and accounts for student learning by examining results

PAUSE

What "Focused Questions" does
a principal need as a professional development leader?

FOCUSED QUESTIONS FOR THE PRINCIPAL AS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT LEADER

Emerson once said, "The ancestor of every action is a thought." A pilot uses a checklist prior to every flight, no matter how long or short, to address the important elements of a complex machine. The metaphoric checklists for individuals and organizations are the guiding questions that are asked to focus thoughts, attention, and action. These have been referred to as "Habits of Mind" (Costa & Kallick, 2000; Meier, 1995) or "mental models" (Senge, 1990). In this book, the mental exercise of asking questions to guide thinking and decisions is referred to as "Focused Questions."

Meier's 1995 book, *The Power of Their Ideas: Lessons for America From a Small School in Harlem*, described the development of Central

Park East Secondary School (CPESS). Based on the work of John Dewey, the staff of CPESS decided that the sign of an educated person is reflected by the quality of questions he or she asks. The "habits" were framed as intellectual questions. Then the staff set about developing strategies for in-depth practice of the five questions as a critical part of every student's education. The CPESS Habits of Mind are not just about asking questions, but are more about focused probing and considering the answers. The specific words of the questions may vary, but they are centered on evidence (How do you know?), viewpoint (Who said it?), connections (What causes what?), supposition (How might things have been different?), and if it matters (Who cares?).

It is the premise of this book that the principal as a professional development leader must have "Focused Questions" that frame his or her thinking about professional development. These Focused Questions are tools for each of the roles the leader plays and guide the professional development work (see Figure 1.5). The questions are discussed under each of the roles and will be highlighted in each appropriate chapter (Chapter 2, Builder; Chapter 3, Designer; Chapter 4, Implementer; Chapter 5, Reflective Leader).

Principals who continually utilize these questions keep the focus on the learning goal by posing the important questions and facilitating the professional dialogue, learning, action, and reflection that bring about increased student achievement. The Focused Questions serve as an anchor to hold fast to what is truly important for professional growth. This book provides the principal with the research, experiences, examples, and tools to put the Focused Questions into action that make a difference for teacher learning and student achievement. We invite you to begin the journey of learning as we introduce the roles!
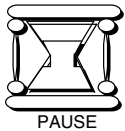
PAUSE

What are the critical roles for the principal as professional development leader and the impact on improved student learning?

ROLES AS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT LEADER

The principal and other site leaders must fully understand the impact they have on the organization and individuals. Certain roles can lead to organizational culture changes that create a professional learning community. To carry out this task, the principal has various roles

Figure 1.5   Focused Questions: Principal as Professional
Development Leader

BUILDER
PREPARING
Where are we &
where do we want to be?
How do the data, research &
best practice inform our work?
What are our learning
needs?

DESIGNER
PLANNING
How do we design effective
professional development?
What professional
development plans will help us
reach our target?
What is the balance & infusion
of inside & outside expertise?

Principal
as
Professional
Development
Leader

REFLECTIVE LEADER
EVALUATING
What progress have we made?
How does our progress inform
our practice?
How do we check for
understanding?

IMPLEMENTER
TAKING ACTION
How do we take action?
What are the supportive
conditions for professional
development?
What tools will help
sustain the
action?

to play in partnership with the school community. The roles of the
principal as a professional development leader are as follows:

- Builder: Preparing the capacity of the professional learning
  community
- Designer: Planning professional development
- Implementer: Taking action
- Reflective Leader: Evaluating results

It is the premise of this book that the principal needs to under-
stand each role to build professional learning within the school. A

Figure 1.6   Roles of Principal as Professional Development Leader

ROLES
Builder
Designer
Implementer
Reflective Leader
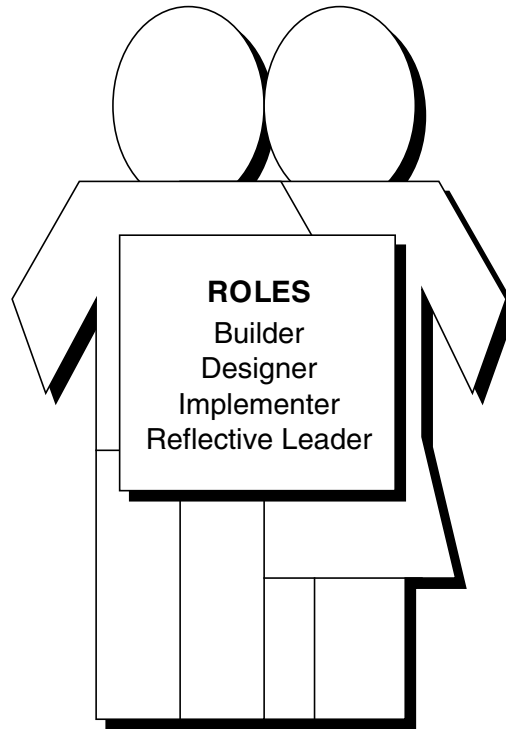
brief overview of each of these roles will be shared here (see Figure 1.6), and an in-depth discussion will take place in each of the following chapters (Chapter 2, Builder; Chapter 3, Designer; Chapter 4, Implementer; Chapter 5, Reflective Leader).

Builder: Preparing the Capacity of the Professional Learning Community (PLC)

The preparation role for the principal is as builder of a professional learning community. To carry out this role, the principal should focus on these preparation questions as he or she works with the teachers and the school community.

Builder—Preparing: Focused Questions
Where are we and where do we want to be?
How do the data, research, and best practice inform our work?
What are our learning needs?

Like many important things, "The Vision" can get lost in the hectic day-to-day pace of the principalship. A conscious revisiting is necessary to make the school vision a part of the normal everyday workings of the school. Educators can find themselves often sidetracked by multiple demands and daily crises even when the school vision is written and in hand. The principal has to help the school learning community come to terms with vision and answer the question: *Where are we and where do we want to be?*

For many years, experts have been touting the importance of having a vision for the organization. In the 1985 seminal book about successful business leaders by Bennis and Nanus, *Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge,* the first of four strategies for leadership is "Attention Through Vision." Bennis and Nanus argue that "vision is the creating of focus" (p. 28) and that "[a] vision is a target that beckons" (p. 89). Coming on the heels of the effective school research (Coleman, Hoffer, & Kilgore, 1982; Corcoran & Wilson, 1986; Edmonds, 1979; Lightfoot, 1983; Rutter, 1983) that began to define factors leading to excellence in schools, the knowledge that successful leaders used the concept of vision to keep the organization moving forward was simple yet earthshaking. Schools across the country were required to adopt written vision statements as part of school improvement plans.

A shared vision stems from each member of the organization examining his or her own beliefs and assumptions. Only then can the members address the vision for the school. Too often, this step is overlooked, and the vision statements become hollow recitations of slogans or developed by one person rather than clear statements of deeply held beliefs of the organization. Professional development that helps develop shared vision models the process of developing a learning culture within the school.

In schools where the vision exemplifies an agreed-upon future based on attaining excellence, site leaders can continually point to that focus in day-to-day activities. As one former principal stated recently, "No matter what, the staff knows I will ask this question; How does this help us reach our vision?" The goal is for every staff member to ask this question, too.

In creating a collaborative learning community, it is not unusual to uncover thoughts and beliefs that were previously unstated. Assumptions such as "If it weren't for the all the English learners in my classroom, my students' scores would be good" or "Certain students will never be able to learn Algebra" or "The parents don't care about their children's education because they never did well in

school themselves" must be challenged. The greatest strength any principal can have is an unwavering passion for all students being held to high standards. The principal sets the tone for continually challenging assumptions and then leading the charge to find a way to change what is happening. The questions the principal continually asks include: *How do the data, research and best practice inform our work? By examining the data, what are our learning needs?*

No other key to success has had such an impact as school personnel truly understanding the context of the students' community. Understanding context is to the school community much like market research is to the business community. Who is out there? What do they want? How can we meet their needs? This includes a deep understanding of ethnic, racial, religious, and other related issues within the community. In addition, socioeconomic and parent education levels must be considered. What community resources are already in place, and which agencies provide services? How can the school connect with the community networks and build on those resources to develop good communication and quality educational opportunities for all the constituents? Barth says in *Improving School From Within* (1990) that educators should create the kind of school that they would want their children to attend. That school needs to reflect the students and the community.

In addition to understanding the school community context, the organizational culture of the school must be addressed. Step on most school campuses, and staff members can be heard to complain about "wasted time" in staff meetings and inservices. Worse yet are the horror stories of committee work and subsequent recommendations being tossed aside as the school leader makes an authoritarian decision that everyone thought would be in the decision-making realm of the committee. Improving process in the school can be described as the professional development for the system. As people grow and change, so do the systems of their organizations. On the flip side of the coin, it has long been recognized that sometimes changing attitudes and beliefs begins with changes in behaviors. Instituting processes that reflect a learning community can begin to change the people and the culture in the organization.

Designer: Planning Professional Development

It is important for the principal to learn about effective professional development and make decisions using the context and the needs of the school.

Designer—Planning: Focused Questions
How do we design effective professional development?
What professional development plans will help us reach our target?
What is the balance and infusion of inside and outside expertise?

In this era of high-stakes testing, No Child Left Behind (2001) mandates, and public scrutiny, no one needs to remind today's principals that they are highly accountable for the instructional program. If the bottom line is improved student learning, then educators should focus on students and not just learning new teaching strategies for professional development. So, instead of starting with the teacher and classroom techniques, effective principals understand the power of knowing the students well as learners and unique individuals. In *The Results Fieldbook: Practical Strategies From Dramatically Improved Schools,* Schmoker (2001) provides powerful examples of schools and districts that have made gains "[w]hen teachers regularly and collaboratively review assessment data for the purpose of improving practice to reach measurable achievement goals" (p. 1).

According to Calhoun (2002), using data can be initially frightening "because it requires that we juxtapose our practice and our students' performance against exemplary research-based practices and high levels of student performance attained in similar settings" (p. 20). This can be worrisome for some staffs. However, she argues that Action Research, which collaboratively engages teachers, can be "used as a school improvement tool or individual professional development option" (p. 23). Creating a variety of group opportunities within the learning community can be effective. It is more supportive for individuals to be a part of a collaborative effort. The collective focus of the staff will lead to the greatest gains for the students. *How do we design effective professional development? What professional development plans will help us reach our target?*

In a results-driven school culture, the focus is on learning. Student data is analyzed continuously, and a review of the data produces a basis for narrowing the focus and addressing the achievement gaps the data shows. Benchmarks are developed to measure student progress and make the necessary adjustments in the classroom to ensure growth. Professional development plans are created based on these real needs to reach targets for improvement. This is a huge change from the traditional course of professional development focused on new materials, curriculum, and teaching strategies.

Resources and plans are created with this focus in mind. A principal must be ready to plan for, understand, and support the ongoing needs as the learning community grapples with new learning and change. A conscious effort to balance inside knowledge with outside knowledge helps connect the school to the larger community while building the capacity of the teachers to value the knowledge gained through experience (Fullan, 1993: Lieberman, 1996). *What is the balance and infusion of inside and outside expertise?*

Implementer: Taking Action

Taking action is about making changes. Principals need to know "how" and "when" to help initiate the most appropriate changes.

> **Implementer—Taking Action: Focused Questions**
> How do we take action?
> What are the supportive conditions for professional development?
> What tools will help sustain the action?

Researchers agree on many of the facets of change in education. There are phases to the process, change definitely takes time, different types of changes can be implemented, and some schools are especially resilient to change (Fullan, 1993; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Goodlad, 1983; Lieberman, 1995b; McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993; Tyack & Cuban, 1997). There are multiple processes for action to create change and the appropriate professional growth. *How do we take action?*

As the professional learning community begins and continues the ongoing process of professional development, there will be various needs for resources such as time, materials, research, and expertise as well as various tools. *What are the supportive conditions for professional development? What tools will help sustain the action?*

Reflective Leader: Evaluating Results

No one would consider taking a journey in unfamiliar territory without occasionally referring to the map, checking for guideposts, and determining progress to the destination. For professional development, each trip is different due to the human nature of the individuals involved.

Reflective Leader—Evaluating: Focused Questions
What progress have we made?
How does our progress inform our practice?
How do we check for understanding?

Reflective leaders constantly consider their actions and gather feedback from others when necessary. Reflection becomes a habit for effective leaders and learning communities. Wanting to know what progress is being made and how that progress is informing practice is critical to the study and reflection on actions. A principal as reflective leader must model a continuous process of inquiry and reflections on actions. A reflective leader asks the following questions of professional development actions: *What progress have we made? How does our progress inform our practice? How do we check for understanding?*

Human brains are wired to observe, consider the information, and then make meaning out of it. Using the process of reflection allows for constructing greater connections and meaning. Periodically checking for understanding not only builds insight but also allows us to share with others and clear up any potential misunderstandings. This evaluation of efforts is critical to finding out what has been accomplished and what needs continued attention. Too often, there is not an established reflection and evaluation process in place to focus the efforts on what has been the clear effect on student achievement.

At the end of each chapter, we have included key points as a summary. Take a moment now and review the key points for Chapter 1. This chapter has served to introduce the model for principal leadership and professional development used throughout this book. We invite you to think deeply about your own school as you begin this journey.

KEY POINTS OF CHAPTER 1

- Professional development is the critical leverage point for change in schools and increased student learning.
- The professional development leader needs to share leadership and build the school culture collaboratively to effect change.
- Professional development is defined as a collaborative learning process that nourishes adult-learner-centered growth in the context of job-embedded work that results in improved student learning.
- High-quality professional development has critical components that must be addressed if professional educators are to grow and schools are to improve.
- Focused Questions will serve to anchor the principal and the professional learning community with continued focus and improvement of student learning.
- There are four critical roles for the principal as a professional development leader: Builder, Designer, Implementer, and Reflective Leader.

Note: At the end of the book, see Resources A and B and Recommended Readings and Web sites. These are meant to be helpful to leaders as they pursue the professional development process.