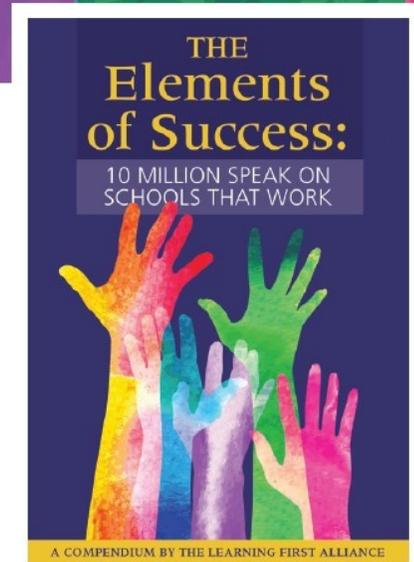


Distributed Leadership



What do successful schools look like? There is no one answer. Each successful school reflects the beliefs and character of its community, and each addresses the needs of its students in its own way. However, in *The Elements of Success: 10 Million Speak on Schools That Work*, the Learning First Alliance identifies six elements common to all successful schools. Members of the Alliance, who represent more than 10 million educators, parents and local policymakers, agree these are the factors needed for a school to perform at a high level and help all students succeed, while understanding these elements don't look the same in each school. How they are achieved and integrated depends greatly on context.

One of these elements is distributed leadership.

What does that mean? The most successful schools define leadership broadly. Leadership is distributed – to principals, teachers, community members and others in the building – and decision-making is a shared endeavor. These schools also display:

- **High standards for school leadership:** In successful schools, principals and other administrators meet the Professional Standards for Educational Leadership developed by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration and widely embraced by the education community. The standards lay out expectations for school leaders in 10 areas, which work together to improve student learning.
 - **Communications leadership:** Effective communications are a key component of successful schools. Their leaders make the investments of time and resources necessary to build solid, trusting internal (among staff) and external (with parents, families and other community members) relationships. They strategically integrate communications into their daily life in ways that support teaching and learning, guided by the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) rubrics of practice and suggested measures for successful school communications programs.
 - **Teacher leadership:** In successful schools, teacher leaders play a critical role. They take responsibility for instruction, which can include observing colleagues and offering feedback, working with colleagues to conduct research and leading professional learning, among other activities. They play a key role in forming partnerships with community organizations and families and are included with principals and district leadership for discussions and decision-making about important school policies. The National Education Association (NEA), National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) and Center for Teaching Quality, as part of their Teacher Leadership Initiative, developed Teacher Leadership Competencies that help articulate a vision for transformative teacher leadership.
-

-
- **School counselor leadership:** In successful schools, school counselors participate as members and leaders of the educational team. These schools understand that comprehensive, data-driven school counseling programs are an integral component of the school's academic – and overall – mission, and they deliver such programs to all students. "The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs" outlines the key components of high-quality programs.
 - **School board leadership:** The most successful schools and school districts have strong local school boards that view their most important responsibility as working with their communities to improve student achievement in the public schools. Research shows that the more effective the board, the better a school district's students perform. The National School Boards Association (NSBA) publication "The Key Work of School Boards" identifies a framework for effective school governance.
 - **Leadership development:** At successful schools, the development of educational leaders – whether teachers, principals, school counselors or others – is supported. Such development shares key characteristics identified as common in high-quality school leader preparation and professional learning programs, including structures allowing participants to learn among colleagues and learning opportunities focused on solving specific problems that integrate theory with practice. Most educational associations offer leadership development programs.

Successful schools demonstrate these types of leadership in different ways, based on their specific goals, challenges and strengths. But while what it looks like varies, distributed leadership is present in all successful schools.

Of course, just because a school has distributed leadership doesn't mean that it will thrive; it is a necessary, but not sufficient, factor in success. For example, a school with such leadership that lacks family and community engagement or a commitment to equity and access will struggle. True success requires all six elements of successful schools:

- Focus on the Total Child
- Commitment to Equity and Access
- Family and Community Engagement
- Distributed Leadership
- Strong, Supported Teaching Force and Staff
- Relationship-Oriented School Climate

To learn more and read the full report or executive summary, visit <https://learningfirst.org/elementsofsuccess>.

Learning First Alliance Members

American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education; AASA, The School Superintendents Association; American Federation of Teachers; American School Counselor Association; Consortium for School Networking; Learning Forward; National Association of Elementary School Principals; National Association of Secondary School Principals; National Education Association; National PTA; National School Boards Association; National School Public Relations Association