Protocol for Conducting a Focus Group on the 2014 DRAFT ISLLC Standards

September 2014
Protocol for Conducting a Focus Group on the  
2014 DRAFT ISLLC Standards for School Leaders  

September 2014

Background

In July 2014, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) completed a draft of the 2014 ISLLC Standards for School Leaders. In September and early October 2014, CCSSO and NPBEA are seeking public comment in order to refine and finalize the standards. The public comment period ends October 10, 2014. To solicit comments from a broad range of stakeholders, CCSSO posted a publicly-available survey at https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ISLLCPUBLICCOMMENT. Additionally, CCSSO has invited education organizations to host focus groups on the 2014 ISLLC Standards. The focus groups should be held in-person and should produce a written commentary to be submitted electronically to CCSSO through this Focus Group Reporting Form.

This document is intended to provide a protocol for designing and conducting a focus group and for submitting written feedback to CCSSO. It includes focus group objectives; selection of participants, moderator, and note-taker; sample invitation to participate and pre-focus group assignments; format; moderator guide and note-taking template; and transmission information.

Questions about this protocol or about the model core teaching standards should be directed to Irv Richardson at isllcfocusgroupresults@gmail.com.

Objectives of the Focus Groups

- Focus group participants will provide substantive feedback on the 2014 DRAFT ISLLC Standards for School Leaders overall and on each of the eleven individual standards (feedback will be summarized by the moderator and the note-taker and submitted to the ISLLC Standards Refresh Committee via email at isllcfocusgroupresults@gmail.com).

- CCSSO’s 2014 ISLLC Standards Refresh Committee will utilize feedback from the focus groups, together with the comments from the public to refine and finalize the 2014 ISLLC Standards.
Selection of Focus Group Participants, Moderator, and Note-Taker

**Participants:** Focus group participants should include five to ten people (six to eight is preferred) representative of your constituents, who are willing to review the 2014 ISLLC Standards prior to the focus group session, complete a pre-focus group worksheet, and actively participate in the focus group discussion. Selection of participants should reflect a deliberate effort to include a diverse range of perspectives and experiences.

**Moderator:** The moderator should be familiar with the revised model core teaching standards and be willing to solicit both positive and negative feedback.

**Note-Taker:** The note-taker should be willing to take notes, work with the moderator to confirm the findings, and transmit the report to CCSSO.

**Invitation to Participate**

The moderator should invite participants to fulfill the objectives listed above.

A sample “Invitation to Participate in a Focus Group on the 2014 ISLLC Standards” is provided (Attachment 1).

**Pre-Focus Group Assignments**

In order to provide substantive feedback on the 2014 DRAFT ISLLC Standards overall and individually in just 90 minutes, participants must have reviewed the model core teaching standards prior to the focus group discussion. Therefore, at least one week prior to the focus group session, the moderator should provide participants with the link to the 2014 DRAFT ISLLC Standards document and the Pre-Focus Group Worksheet. The moderator should request that participants review the 2014 DRAFT ISLLC Standards and use the worksheet to capture their thoughts prior to the focus group discussion. The moderator also should instruct participants to bring both documents to the focus group session for reference only (the moderator will not collect the worksheet).

The 2014 DRAFT ISLLC Standards document is available at


The Pre-Focus Group Worksheet is Attachment 2 to this document.

**Format**

The focus group should be conducted in a comfortable space. If conducting the focus group in-person, participants should be seated so they can see the moderator as well as each other.

If conducting the focus group virtually, the technology should allow for all participants to actively participate and to be heard by the moderator and all other participants.
A discussion guide is offered to help the moderator facilitate the focus group session (Attachment 3). It includes tips for the moderator, a suggested welcome and introduction script, focus group questions, and a suggested wrap-up script.

Attachment 3 also can be used as template for note taking. Throughout the focus group session, the note-taker will be asked to use the notes: (1) to ask follow-up questions on important points or to clarify vague points; and (2) to confirm with participants the key points and themes for each question.

Tips on recording and reporting the focus group findings are provided in Attachment 4.

**Transmission Information**

Following the focus group session, the note-taker will submit the comments to the ISLLC Standards Refresh Committee via email by saving this template with the name of the organization and date of the focus group and then emailing the form as an attachment to isllcfocusgroupresults@gmail.com.

**Questions?**

Please email any questions to Irv Richardson at isllcfocusgroupresults@gmail.com.

**Thank you for your willingness to conduct a focus group on the 2014 DRAFT ISLLC Standards!**
Attachment 1. Sample Invitation to Participate in Focus Group

[Organization’s Letterhead or Email Form]

[Date]

Dear [Potential Participant]:

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) have released for public comment the 2014 DRAFT ISLLC Standards for School Leaders.

CCSSO is soliciting public comment through October 10, 2014. To assist CCSSO in generating substantive feedback from a broad range of stakeholders, we are inviting interested stakeholders to conduct focus groups about the 2014 DRAFT ISLLC Standards. The purpose of these focus groups will be to provide written feedback that members of the 2014 ISLLC Standards ISLLC Refresh Committee can use to refine and finalize the standards.

Your feedback is important. Therefore, we invite you to participate in the focus group to be held on [date] at [location]. Please RSVP by [date] via email at xx@xx.org.

If you have any questions about the focus group, please contact [contact person] at [email] or [phone number].

Thank you.

Sincerely,

[Moderator]
Attachment 2. Pre-Focus Group Worksheet

2014 DRAFT ISLLC Standards
Pre-Focus Group Worksheet

[Please complete and have this worksheet available to you for reference during the focus group session.]

## Standards Overall

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How representative are the standards as a whole of a clear, coherent vision for effective school leadership?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What aspect or quality of the standards could be strengthened?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is given too much emphasis?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is missing from the standards as a whole?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other overall reactions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please select the rating that best reflects your assessment of the standards as a whole:</td>
<td>(  ) needs no or only minor work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(  ) needs moderate work</td>
<td>(  ) needs major work/rethinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(  ) entirely rewrite</td>
<td>(  ) no opinion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Individual Standards (Please refer to the 2014 DRAFT ISLLC Standards, beginning on page 16.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard 1: Vision and Mission</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by ensuring the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a child-centered vision of quality schooling that is shared by all members of the school community.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard 2: Instructional Capacity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by enhancing instructional capacity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
### Standard 3: Instruction
An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by promoting instruction that maximizes student learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Standard 4: Curriculum & Assessment
An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by promoting robust and meaningful curricula and assessment programs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 5: Community of Care for Students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by promoting the development of an inclusive school climate characterized by supportive relationships and a personalized culture of care.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard 6: Professional Culture for Teachers and Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by promoting professionally normed communities for teachers and other professional staff.</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard 7: Communities of Engagement for Families</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by promoting communities of engagement for families and other stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strengths</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recommendations</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Standard 8: Operations and Management</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by ensuring effective and efficient management of the school or district to promote student social and academic learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strengths</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recommendations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Standard 9: Ethical Principles and Professional Norms**
An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by adhering to ethical principles and professional norms.

**Standard 10: Equity and Cultural Responsiveness**
An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by ensuring the development of an equitable and culturally responsive school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

10
Standard 11: Continuous School Improvement
An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by ensuring the development of a culture of continuous school improvement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Attachment 3. Focus Group on 2014 ISLLC Standards Moderator Guide and Note-Taking Template

This guide is provided for the moderator and note-taker to use during the focus group session. It is designed with text boxes in which to record participant responses during the focus group. After the focus group, the template should be saved with the name of the group holding the focus group and the date (for example, save template as: your organization-month-day-14). After saving the template, email the template as an attachment to the ISLLC Standards Refresh Committee via email to isllcfocusgroupresults@gmail.com.

If you have experience moderating focus group sessions, please use your experience to facilitate the group in the ways that you have found productive in the past. If you do not have prior experience, you may find the following tips helpful.

Moderator Tips:

The moderator should limit his/her personal reaction to the feedback (e.g., head nodding, verbal responses) and avoid judgment statements (e.g., “that’s good,” “that’s right”).

The moderator should use subtle group control to engage all participants, including those who may present themselves as “experts,” “dominant talkers,” “shy participants,” and “ramblers.”

The moderator may use pauses (i.e., wait time) and probes (e.g., “please explain further” or “please give an example”) to elicit clear, substantive feedback.

The moderator may wish to write the time at the start of each section in order to keep track of time. The moderator may wish to have the note-taker support time keeping.

Note-Taker Tips:

The note-taker should type directly into this template during the session in order to easily submit the commentary.

The note-taker may wish to tape the focus group to refer to while preparing the report. This may be especially helpful during the times when the note-taker is providing a summary, as it may be difficult to take notes while speaking. (If the note-taker does audio tape the focus group, the moderator should announce this at the outset of the event.)
Focus Group Reporting Form

Collecting Basic Information:

The online Focus Group Reporting Form begins with basic demographic and contact information. The note-taker will want to collect this information prior to the start of the focus group session.

1. Name of hosting organization: Click here to enter text.

2. Moderator: Click here to enter text.

3. Moderator’s email address: Click here to enter text.

4. Note taker: Click here to enter text.

5. Note taker’s email address: Click here to enter text.

6. Number of focus group participants: Click here to enter text.

7. Date of focus group: Click here to enter text.
Moderator Script:

The focus group session should include three distinct stages: (1) introduction; (2) questions and confirmation, and (3) wrap up.

Stage I: Introduction (10 minutes)  Time started: _____________

- Introduce yourself and note-taker

- Sample script: Thank you for taking part in our focus group today. I am _________. Our note-taker today is __________________, whose task will be to capture your comments and report them to CCSSO’s and NPBEA’s ISLLC Standards Refresh Committee. Describe purposes of the session

  Sample script: The purpose of this focus group is to solicit feedback on the 2014 DRAFT ISLLC Standards for School Leaders. The feedback we generate here today will help the members of the 2014 ISLLC Refresh Committee members to refine and finalize the standards.

- Encourage participants to share their point of view.

  Sample script: As the moderator, I encourage everyone to provide their opinion about the standards.

  I was not involved in the drafting of these standards, so I cannot answer questions about the intent of the standards.

- Discuss confidentiality and encourage focus group participants not to share what others share with the group.

  Sample script: We will be reporting results in the aggregate on a reporting form provided by CCSSO. While we may capture some quotations, individual comments will not be attributed to you.

  In order to protect confidentiality, we ask that you not share with others who said what in the focus group today.

- Set ground rules appropriate for your context

  For example, if you want to audio tape the focus group, a sample script might include: We will be audio taping this focus group for our own internal use only. We need to have the audio just in case we have a question about our notes and need to refer back when we are reporting our findings. We will not share the audio tape and will not release the audio for public review.

- Ask participants to introduce themselves to each other.
Stage II: Questions (75 minutes)

Overview of the 2014 DRAFT ISLLC Standards Document (3 minutes)

**Sample Script:** We’ll be using the DRAFT of the 2014 ISLLC Standards for School Leaders.

We will begin by talking about the standards as a whole. In order to get more specific feedback, we also will work through standard-by-standard. We encourage you to remember that there are connections among the standards as we talk.

You should feel free to submit your own comments on the public comment form (available at [https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ISLLCPUBLICCOMMENT](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ISLLCPUBLICCOMMENT)).

The standards themselves start on page 16. We will refer to these pages specifically when we get to the standard-by-standard section.
General Questions on the Standards Overall (15 minutes)  

Sample Script: To get started, we will consider the standards as a whole.

Questions (Moderator)

8. How representative are the 2014 DRAFT ISLLC Standards as a whole of a clear, coherent vision for effective school leadership?

Click here to enter text.

9. What aspects or qualities of the standards are particularly strong?

Click here to enter text.

10. What aspects or qualities are weak, missing, or should be strengthened? How might they be strengthened?

Click here to enter text.

11. If you were advising the members of the ISLLC Standards Refresh Committee on changes to make to the standards overall, what would be your top three recommendations?

Click here to enter text.
Specific Questions for Each Standard (4-5 minutes per standard; 50 minutes total)

Sample Script: Now we’ll talk about each standard individually. For each, I’ll ask about strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations for improvement.

**Standard #1 (4-5 minutes)**


12. What aspects or qualities of Standard #1 and its accompanying functions are particularly strong? Why?

Click here to enter text.

13. What aspects or qualities are weak or should be strengthened? How?
Click here to enter text.

14. If you were advising the members of the ISLLC Standards Refresh Committee on changes to make to Standard #1, what would be your top recommendation?

Click here to enter text.

Turn to the note-taker for the summary.

15. Note-taker says: What I am hearing is … [summarize key points from each question]. Is there anything I misunderstood?

Click here to enter text.
Standard #2 (4-5 minutes)  


16. What aspects or qualities of Standard #2 and its accompanying functions are particularly strong? Why?

Click here to enter text.

17. What aspects or qualities are weak or should be strengthened? How?

Click here to enter text.

18. If you were advising the members of the ISLLC Standards Refresh Committee on changes to make to Standard #2, what would be your top recommendation?

Click here to enter text.

Turn to the note-taker for the summary.

19. Note-taker says: What I am hearing is … [summarize key points from each question]. Is there anything I misunderstood?

Click here to enter text.
Standard #3 (4-5 minutes)  

Sample Script: On page 17 of the 2014 DRAFT ISLLC Standards document, you will see Standard #3, Instruction.

20. What aspects or qualities of Standard #3 and its accompanying functions are particularly strong? Why?

Click here to enter text.

21. What aspects or qualities are weak or should be strengthened? How?

Click here to enter text.

22. If you were advising the members of the ISLLC Standards Refresh Committee on changes to make to Standard #3, what would be your top recommendation?

Click here to enter text.

Turn to the note-taker for the summary.

23. Note-taker says: What I am hearing is … [summarize key points from each question]. Is there anything I misunderstood?

Click here to enter text.
Sample Script: On page 17 of the 2014 DRAFT ISLLC Standards document, you will see Standard #4, *Curriculum and Assessment*.

24. What aspects or qualities of Standard #4 and its accompanying functions are particularly strong? Why?

Click here to enter text.

25. What aspects or qualities are weak or should be strengthened? How?

Click here to enter text.

26. If you were advising the members of the ISLLC Standards Refresh Committee on changes to make to Standard #4, what would be your top recommendation?

Click here to enter text.

Turn to the note-taker for the summary.

27. Note-taker says: What I am hearing is … [summarize key points from each question]. Is there anything I misunderstood?

Click here to enter text.
Standard #5 (4-5 minutes)  

Sample Script: On page 18 of the 2014 DRAFT ISLLC Standards document, you will see Standard #5, *Community of Care for Students*.

28. What aspects or qualities of Standard #5 and its accompanying functions are particularly strong? Why?

Click here to enter text.

29. What aspects or qualities are weak or should be strengthened? How?

Click here to enter text.

30. If you were advising the members of the ISLLC Standards Refresh Committee on changes to make to Standard #5, what would be your top recommendation?

Click here to enter text.

Turn to the note-taker for the summary.

31. **Note-taker says:** What I am hearing is … [summarize key points from each question]. Is there anything I misunderstood?

Click here to enter text.
Sample Script: On page 18 of the 2014 DRAFT ISLLC Standards document, you will see Standard #6, *Professional Culture for Teachers and Staff*.

32. What aspects or qualities of Standard #6 and its accompanying functions are particularly strong? Why?

Click here to enter text.

33. What aspects or qualities are weak or should be strengthened? How?

Click here to enter text.

34. If you were advising the members of the ISLLC Standards Refresh Committee on changes to make to Standard #6, what would be your top recommendation?

Click here to enter text.

Turn to the note-taker for the summary.

35. **Note-taker says:** What I am hearing is … [summarize key points from each question]. Is there anything I misunderstood?

Click here to enter text.
Standard #7 (4-5 minutes)  

Sample Script: On page 19 of the 2014 DRAFT ISLLC Standards document, you will see Standard #7 Communities of Engagement for Families.

36. What aspects or qualities of Standard #7 and its accompanying functions are particularly strong? Why?

Click here to enter text.

37. What aspects or qualities are weak or should be strengthened? How?

Click here to enter text.

38. If you were advising the members of the ISLLC Standards Refresh Committee on changes to make to Standard #7, what would be your top recommendation?

Click here to enter text.

Turn to the note-taker for the summary.

39. Note-taker says: What I am hearing is … [summarize key points from each question]. Is there anything I misunderstood?

Click here to enter text.
Standard #8 (4-5 minutes)  

Time started: ______________


40. What aspects or qualities of Standard #8 and its accompanying functions are particularly strong? Why?

Click here to enter text.

41. What aspects or qualities are weak or should be strengthened? How?

Click here to enter text.

42. If you were advising the members of the ISLLC Standards Refresh Committee on changes to make to Standard #8, what would be your top recommendation?

Click here to enter text.

Turn to the note-taker for the summary.

43. **Note-taker says:** What I am hearing is … [summarize key points from each question]. Is there anything I misunderstood?

Click here to enter text.
Standard #9 (4-5 minutes)  Time started: ______________

Sample Script: On page 20 of the 2014 DRAFT ISLLC Standards document, you will see Standard #9, *Ethical Principles and Professional Norms*.

44. What aspects or qualities of Standard #9 and its accompanying functions are particularly strong? Why?

Click here to enter text.

45. What aspects or qualities are weak or should be strengthened? How?

Click here to enter text.

46. If you were advising the members of the ISLLC Standards Refresh Committee on changes to make to Standard #9, what would be your top recommendation?

Click here to enter text.

Turn to the note-taker for the summary.

47. Note-taker says: What I am hearing is … [summarize key points from each question]. Is there anything I misunderstood?

Click here to enter text.

48. What aspects or qualities of Standard #10 and its accompanying functions are particularly strong? Why?

Click here to enter text.

49. What aspects or qualities are weak or should be strengthened? How?

Click here to enter text.

50. If you were advising the members of the ISLLC Standards Refresh Committee on changes to make to Standard #10, what would be your top recommendation?

Click here to enter text.

Turn to the note-taker for the summary.

51. Note-taker says: What I am hearing is … [summarize key points from each question]. Is there anything I misunderstood?

Click here to enter text.
Standard #11 (4-5 minutes)

Sample Script: On page 21 of the 2014 DRAFT ISLLC Standards document, you will see Standard #11, Continuous School Improvement.

52. What aspects or qualities of Standard #11 and its accompanying functions are particularly strong? Why?

Click here to enter text.

53. What aspects or qualities are weak or should be strengthened? How?

Click here to enter text.

54. If you were advising the members of the ISLLC Standards Refresh Committee on changes to make to Standard #11, what would be your top recommendation?

Click here to enter text.

Turn to the note-taker for the summary.

55. Note-taker says: What I am hearing is … [summarize key points from each question]. Is there anything I misunderstood?

Click here to enter text.
56. What is your overall assessment of the 2014 DRAFT ISLLC Standards?

[NOTE: The moderator should take a tally of the responses to this question, and note participants’ reasons for their ratings if they are offered. You will want to read through the options first.]

( ) Need no or only minor work
   NOTES: Click here to enter text.

( ) Needs moderate work
   NOTES: Click here to enter text.

( ) Needs major work/rethinking
   NOTES: Click here to enter text.

( ) Entirely rewrite
   NOTES: Click here to enter text.

( ) No opinion
   NOTES: Click here to enter text.

57. Is there anything you would like to add that we have not discussed?

Click here to enter text.
Stage III: Wrap Up (5 minutes)  

- Review purpose, share reminders, and thank the participants

**Sample Script:** As we noted, the purpose of this focus group was to solicit feedback on the 2014 DRAFT ISLLC Standards. We will send the feedback we generated here to the 2014 ISLLC Standards Refresh Committee to help them refine and finalize the standards.

I want to remind you that you can submit personal comments via the public comment survey form at [https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ISLLCPUBLICCOMMENT](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ISLLCPUBLICCOMMENT).

[Insert announcements you or your organization might want to share.]

Thank you very much for taking time to review the standards and participate in this focus group. It is important that our constituents’ interests and concerns are represented as the standards are revised. We appreciate your thoughtful participation!

**Post-Focus Group:**

Following the focus group, the note-taker should work with the moderator to complete the Focus Group Reporting Form and submit it electronically by saving this template with the name of the organization and date of the focus group and then emailing the form as an attachment to [isllcfocusgroupresults@gmail.com](mailto:isllcfocusgroupresults@gmail.com).

The public comment period ends on October 10, 2014, which is also when this Focus Group Reporting Form will close. Please be sure to complete your reporting form no later than October 10.

**Thank you!**