



Introduction to the Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008

The Council of the Chief State School Officers is pleased to share the recently revised and approved national standards for educational leadership policy, which most of you have come to know over the years as the “ISLLC¹ Standards.”

The ISLLC Standards have helped guide leadership policy and practice in more than 40 states since they were first released in 1996 by the CCSSO Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC)². The idea then, as now, was to give policymakers and education leaders a common vision and goals for how to improve student achievement through better educational leadership.

This document is intended to make you aware of the new standards—[Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008 as adopted by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration \(NPBEA\)](#). We also want you to make them available as you develop, align, and update your policies and other school leadership activities.

Thanks to the help and participation of CCSSO’s State Consortium on Education Leadership³, [NPBEA member organizations](#), and a NPBEA/ISLLC Research Panel over the past two years, the revised standards reflect new research identifying what leaders do that influences and improves school and student performance. The new standards—which cover the same six major areas as the previous standards—are intended to help states set policies and guidelines for licensure and lead to assessments that more accurately measure and evaluate leadership performance. These policy standards should drive the development of practice standards that are used by practitioners on a daily basis. They are meant to help direct school leaders along the career continuum from entry-level to expert performance.

“These policy standards are the foundation to building a comprehensive and cohesive leadership system that effectively recruits, supports, retains, and rewards high-quality leaders,” notes Gene Wilhoit, executive director of the Council of Chief State School Officers, the national organization that is coordinating the release of the standards. “They give state and district leaders a guide for what to consider in gauging quality and monitoring and supporting improvement in educational leadership.”

To provide additional information and guidance, CCSSO is developing a comprehensive publication that will include the standards, explain the research behind the revisions, and provide other material explaining how the policy standards can be used. The publication will be distributed this spring.

“We encourage wide use of these standards and this spring’s follow-up publication,” said Joe Simpson, the co-chair of the NPBEA Steering Committee. “Share them with your colleagues, the public, as well as policymakers.”

¹ Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium

² To access the 1996 ISLLC Standards for School Leaders, please visit <http://www.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/isllcstd.pdf>.

³ Formerly the Interstate Consortium on School Leadership

Improving Leadership Standards

[Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008](#) organizes the functions that help define strong school leadership under six standards. These standards represent the broad, high-priority themes that education leaders must address in order to promote the success of every student. These six standards call for:

1. Setting a widely shared vision for learning;
2. Developing a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth;
3. Ensuring effective management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment;
4. Collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources;
5. Acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner; and
6. Understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, legal, and cultural context.

In developing the new standards, the NPBEA consulted with policy-oriented, practitioner-based organizations, researchers, higher education officials, and leaders in the field. NPBEA also created a panel of scholars and experts in education administration to identify the research base for updating the ISLLC Standards—research that didn't exist in 1996.

As the Wallace Foundation notes in its 2007 publication [A Bridge to School Reform](#), “Until very recently, in fact, there was only scant evidence about what good leadership actually looks like in schools, districts and states ... and what are the best ways to evaluate the behaviors and performance of school leaders so that effective practices are documented and rewarded, and ineffective ones are remedied.”

As a result of this NPBEA-led work, the new policy standards are informed by findings from hundreds of research efforts as well as the thoughtful input from states and other groups that use the standards. “We didn't re-write the standards,” said Simpson, “But we did make important adjustments to reflect the research findings and the experiences of leaders in the field.”

Understanding the Role of Standards

When carefully designed and implemented, standards increase the likelihood that states and school districts are in the best position possible to raise student achievement. Standards provide the common vision, goals, and priorities that guide policymakers and practitioners. As a result, standards can create a common language to bring consistency and stability to education leadership policy and practice where, historically, there have been neither. This is exactly what ISLLC set out to address when it released its school leadership standards in 1996.

But while those standards have helped influence the development of leadership policies in dozens of states, the new policy standards are more clearly intended to shape and influence policy. They are designed to provide high-level guidance to education and policy leaders at all levels about the traits, goals, and the responsibilities of school and district leaders.

For example, the policy standards can be used to help states set guidelines for:

- What is appropriate to expect leaders to know when they are licensed;
- How improvements in school leadership education programs at colleges and universities should be planned, implemented, and evaluated; and
- Guiding development of assessment instruments, practice standards, and professional development used in helping define principal growth toward expert practice.

According to Wilhoit, “The policy standards are the first step toward creating comprehensive, locally tailored practice standards and other approaches for developing and retaining high-quality school leaders.”

*The **Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)** is a nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO provides leadership, advocacy, and technical assistance on major educational issues. The Council seeks member consensus on major educational issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress, and the public.*

***Members of the National Policy Board for Educational Administration:** American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, American Association of School Administrators, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Council of Chief State School Officers, National Association of Elementary School Principals, National Association of Secondary School Principals, National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, National Council of Professors of Educational Administration, National School Boards Association, and University Council for Educational Administration.*