ENHANCING CAPACITY FOR STANDARDS-BASED LEADERSHIP EVALUATION:
STATE AND DISTRICT ROLES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal, state, and district leaders are increasingly focusing on the quality of educational leadership and how leaders develop and are evaluated. An intentional and thoughtful approach to supporting the development of educational leaders throughout their professional careers is critical to both new and seasoned educational leaders.

This report addresses important dimensions of the educational leadership career pipeline that ensure effective evaluation. Based on a review of the standards and evaluation work of large urban and metropolitan districts across the country, the report shares six key lessons and their implications for enhancing standards-based leadership evaluation work. The key lessons identified in this report are based primarily upon the work of six districts engaged in The Wallace Foundation’s Principal Pipeline Initiative. These districts include Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Schools, Denver Public Schools, Gwinnett County Public Schools, Hillsborough County Public Schools, New York City Public Schools, and Prince George’s County Public Schools. The report also draws from the existing research base and a survey conducted by the Council of the Great City Schools focused on the evaluation of principals, Principal Evaluations and the Principal Supervisor.1

The report has three sections: 1) Setting the Context, which discusses the need for effective systems of evaluation and support for school leaders; 2) Sharing Key Lessons Learned, which highlights how states and districts can work together to agree upon and communicate expectations for school leaders and implement standards-based systems of leadership support and evaluation, thereby increasing teacher effectiveness and improving student outcomes in all schools across the nation; and 3) Improving Standards-Based Leadership Evaluation, which examines leader evaluation as a policy foundation for identifying, and supporting effective educators.

The following lessons are examined in this report and include experience-based advice from the six pipeline districts that describe strategies to consider and adopt when implementing the key tenets of each lesson:

Lesson One: Develop a Common Understanding of the Role of School Leader
Lesson Two: Design Standards to Address Leadership Needs of Individual District Contexts
Lesson Three: Follow a Well-Conceived and Collaborative Process to Develop/Adapt Standards and Keep Them Relevant
Lesson Four: Ensure Leadership Standards Drive Each Component of the Leadership Pipeline
Lesson Five: Individualize Evaluation and Support for School Leader Professional Growth and Development
Lesson Six: Focus the Work of Principal Supervisors on Development and Evaluation

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Enhancing Capacity for Standards-Based Leadership Evaluation: State and District Roles

As a nation, our expectations for student learning have never been higher. We expect students to know more and to use this knowledge to think deeply and critically. More importantly, our expectations apply to all children regardless of where they live, what they look like, or what they believe. These higher expectations have significant implications for educators, particularly educational leaders.

Quality leadership matters. Research consistently shows that principals are one of the most important factors in supporting student learning. Specifically, research has found that leadership is second only to teaching among school-related influences on learning. In the largest study of the impact of school leadership on student achievement, researchers from the University of Minnesota and University of Toronto shared, “To date, we have not found a single case of a school improving its student achievement record in the absence of talented leadership.”

Federal, state, and district leaders are increasingly focusing on the quality of educational leadership and how leaders are developed and evaluated. An intentional and thoughtful approach to supporting the development of educational leaders throughout their professional careers is critical to both new and seasoned educational leaders.

This report addresses important dimensions of the educational leadership career pipeline that ensure effective support and evaluation. Based on a review of the standards and evaluation work of large urban and metropolitan districts across the country, the report shares six key lessons and their implications for enhancing standards-based leadership evaluation and support work. The key lessons identified in this report are based primarily upon the work of districts engaged in The Wallace Foundation’s Principal Pipeline Initiative (see text box below).

About The Wallace Foundation’s Principal Pipeline Initiative

The Wallace Foundation’s Principal Pipeline Initiative utilizes the results of 10 years of site work and research in education leadership to inform the building of a sustainable principal pipeline. The goal is to demonstrate that when an urban district and its principal training programs provide large numbers of talented, aspiring principals with the right pre-service training and on-the-job evaluation and supports, the result will be a pipeline of principals able to improve teaching quality and student achievement district-wide, especially in schools with the greatest needs.

Since 2000, The Wallace Foundation has supported and shared the results of numerous research studies that have proven the effect school leadership has on student learning and teacher instructional practice, thereby unlocking another essential factor in preparing all students to be both college and career ready by the time they graduate from high school.
The report also draws from the existing research base and a survey conducted by the Council of the Great City Schools focused on the evaluation of principals, Principal Evaluations and the Principal Supervisor. The report has three primary sections: 1) Setting the Context, 2) Sharing Key Lessons Learned, and 3) Improving Standards-Based Leadership Evaluation.

I. SETTING THE CONTEXT

We know that the leaders’ role in school effectiveness is pivotal. In fact, their role in developing organizational conditions that enable teachers to impact student achievement is so important that no school should be without a top-notch leader who can create school cultures and conditions that unleash the potential of the faculty.

Our school leaders need to acquire and demonstrate effective instructional expertise and human capital management strategies to ensure the selection, support, evaluation, and retention of the most highly skilled teachers and staff that can support and effect the necessary changes in student learning and achievement.

3 Casserly et al., 2012.

In addition, our school leaders need to ensure that poor children and children of color – who are so often at the margins of academic achievement – are educated to be ready for college and career.

Too often school leaders believe that schools cannot be expected to overcome the obstacles of poverty and discrimination. We need school leaders who understand the power that schools and teachers have to change the lives of children. By believing in the power of their job and developing the knowledge and skills necessary to exert that power, they will not only contribute to the improvement of countless individual lives, but also elevate the political, economic, and cultural well being of the nation.

Careful thinking and planning are needed around the standards that drive the preparation, practice, development, and evaluation of educational leaders. No longer can we conceive of leaders as herculean individuals who flourish devoid of growth opportunities that we have recognized as vital to classroom teachers and other educational professionals.

The development of national educational leadership standards by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) in 1996

8 The NPBEA is currently comprised of a representative from the following associations: American Association of Colleges of Education (AACTE), American Association of School Administrators (AASA), Association of School Business Managers (ASBM), Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), Council of Chief State School Officers, National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA), National School Boards Association (NSBA), and University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA).
marked an important stage of development in the field of educational leadership. Leaders and scholars from across the country came together to identify the key elements of effective educational leadership. Their work resulted in the development and release of the *Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards for School Leaders*\(^9\) in 1996 as well as the release of an updated version of the standards 12 years later—*ISLLC 2008*. These standards and their widespread adoption have provided the field of educational leadership with a set of de facto national educational leadership standards. Having a set of national standards provided a common vision concerning educational leadership and resulted in a major shift that moved school administration away from its primary focus on managerial functions to leadership for learning.

Notably, the key rationale for updating the 1996 *ISLLC Standards* in 2008 was the significant increase in performance expectations for education leaders. With the nation’s implementation of President George W. Bush’s *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) Act of 2001, the responsibilities of educational leadership shifted and expanded significantly. Indeed, state and federal requirements to increase student learning shifted the overarching role of school leader from managing orderly environments to leading instruction. Furthermore, the continued existence of management responsibilities necessitated more collective and distributive leadership models. School and district leaders have been expected to shape a collective vision of student success, to create a school culture that promised success for each and every student, and to purposefully distribute leadership roles and responsibilities to other administrators and teachers in their schools so that teaching and learning would improve and the highest levels of student achievement would be realized.

*ISLLC 2008* includes six standards for educational leaders. These standards are highlights in the text box on the next page. In addition, a subgroup of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), representing 24 different states, the State Consortium on Educational Leadership (SCEL), created *Performance Expectations and Indicators for Educational Leaders*.\(^{10}\) This document articulates concrete expectations for the practice of educational leaders in various roles at different points in their careers and was designed as a guidebook for states implementing the ISLLC policy standards in the new education context.

The implementation of NCLB was followed by the adoption and implementation of several other high impact educational policies/initiatives. Thus, while it has been only five years since the release and implementation of *ISLLC 2008*, the role of education leaders and the context in which they lead is dramatically different.

There are four primary catalysts driving the changes our education leaders are currently leading: the 2008-2010 *Common Core State Standards*, the 2009 *Race to the Top* initiative, the 2010 *Blueprint for Reform* program, and the 2011-2014 *Elementary and Secondary Education Act Flexibility Program*.

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1. Common Core State Standards

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were developed as a result of state education leaders coming to consensus in 2008 on the need for and the development of fewer, clearer, and higher standards for all students. Released by CCSSO and the National Governors Association\(^\text{11}\) on June 2, 2010, these standards provide the basis of an education for all students that prepares them to graduate from high school college- and career-ready.

\(^{11}\) www.corestandards.org

2. Race to the Top

The $4.35 billion \textit{Race to the Top}\(^\text{12}\) contest initiated by the U.S. Department of Education on July 24, 2009, was created to spur innovation and reforms in state and local district K-12 education. Using funds from the Education Recovery Act as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, 19 states have been awarded funding for satisfying certain educational policies, such as the development of rigorous standards and better assessments; adoption of better data systems to provide schools, teachers, and parents with information about student progress; support for teachers and school leaders to become more effective; and increased emphasis and resources for the rigorous interventions needed to turn around the lowest performing schools.

3. Blueprint for Reform

Although no action has been taken, the March 2010 \textit{Blueprint for Reform} communicated President Obama’s vision for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). This blueprint communicated the moral imperative that every child in America deserves a world-class education. This imperative was described as key to securing a more equal, fair, and just society. President Obama asserted, “We must do better. Together, we must achieve a new goal, that by 2020, the United States will once again lead the world in college completion. We must raise the expectations for our students, for our schools, and for ourselves – this must be a national priority. We must ensure that every student graduates from high school well prepared for college and a career. This

\(^{12}\) For more information on Race to the Top, visit http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html and http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/education/reform.
enhancing capacity for standards-based leadership evaluation: state and district roles

...effort will require the skills and talents of many, but especially our nation’s teachers, principals, and other school leaders. Our goal must be to have a great teacher in every classroom and a great principal in every school.”

4. ESEA Flexibility Program

While President Obama’s Blueprint for Reform has yet to result in reauthorization of ESEA, it did purposefully shape the voluntary 2011-2014 ESEA Flexibility Program which allows states to submit ESEA Flexibility Requests in order to better focus on improving student learning and increasing the quality of instruction. From a letter from U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan to chief state school officers, “This voluntary opportunity provides educators and state and local leaders with flexibility regarding specific requirements of NCLB in exchange for rigorous and comprehensive state-developed plans designed to improve educational outcomes for all students, close achievement gaps, increase equity, and improve the quality of instruction. This flexibility is intended to build on and support the significant state and local reform efforts already underway in critical areas such as transitioning to college- and career-ready standards and assessments; developing systems of differentiated recognition, accountability, and support; and evaluating and supporting teacher and principal effectiveness.”

These four initiatives have made state, district, and school leaders central players within a system of accountability that requires them to ensure that each child is college- and career-ready upon graduation from high school and that each teacher effectively meets the diverse learning needs of his/her students on a daily basis. Furthermore, state chiefs, school leaders, and district administrators are expected to lead the full implementation of the CCSS, which will require the transformation of instruction, the use of new assessments, and the adoption and implementation of new educator support and evaluation systems.

Thus, today’s leaders must engage in the practice of continuous school improvement and support that leverages the highest levels of student learning and the most impactful teacher instructional practice.

The emphasis on selecting talented teachers and their continued professional learning has never been more important for school leaders. There is no doubt that policy leaders at the federal, state, and local levels expect more out of educational leaders than has ever been the case. In December 2012, CCSSO released a report, titled Our Responsibility, Our Promise: Transforming Educator Preparation and Entry into the Profession, which serves as a call to action for states and educator preparation programs to ensure that leaders are school-ready.

Three key changes in expectations identified within the Our Responsibility, Our Promise report are


A school-ready principal is ready on day one to blend their energy, knowledge, and professional skills to collaborate and motivate others to transform school learning environments in ways that ensure all students will graduate college and career ready. With other stakeholders, they craft the school’s vision, mission, and strategic goals to focus on and support high levels of learning for all students and high expectations for all members of the school community.

To help transform schools, they lead others in using performance outcomes and other data to strategically align people, time, funding, and school processes to continually improve student achievement and growth, and to nurture and sustain a positive climate and safe school environment for all stakeholders. They work with others to develop, implement, and refine processes to select, induct, support, evaluate, and retain quality personnel to serve in instructional and support roles.

They nurture and support professional growth in others and appropriately share leadership responsibilities. Recognizing that schools are an integral part of the community, they lead and support outreach to students’ families and the wider community to respond to community needs and interests and to integrate community resources into the school.

The Denver framework outlines new performance expectations for school leaders in the Denver Public School (DPS) District and is used throughout the DPS leadership preparation, development, and evaluation system. The DPS standards and other new district leadership standards provide important insight into contemporary school leadership, but they also raise questions about the emphasis that should be placed on different standards, the evidence that should be collected and examined as part of the evaluation process, and the training that principal supervisors will need to effectively evaluate and develop school leaders.

Just as in the DPS example, it is critical that state and district leadership standards underscore and support every aspect of the leadership career pipeline as discussed on page one of a 2012 NPBEA white paper: “The professional pipeline represents a developmental perspective...”
for fostering leadership capacity in schools and districts, from identification of potential talent during the recruitment phase to ensuring career-long learning through professional development.”

It is important to point out that an effective professional pipeline for school leadership has four aligned components as identified by The Wallace Foundation’s Knowledge Center:

1. **Defining the job of the principal and assistant principal.** Districts create clear, rigorous job requirements detailing what principals and assistant principals must know and do. These research-based standards underpin training, hiring, and on-the-job evaluation and support.

2. **Providing high-quality training for aspiring school leaders.** “Pre-service” school leadership training programs, run by universities, nonprofits, or districts, recruit and select only the people with the potential and desire to become effective leaders and provide them with high-quality training.

3. **Engaging in selective hiring practices.** Districts hire only well-prepared candidates, whose expertise meets the needs of the district’s schools and communities.

4. **Evaluating leaders and providing on-the-job support.** Districts regularly evaluate school leaders and provide professional development, including mentoring, that aims to help novice leaders overcome weaknesses pinpointed in evaluations.

“An intentional and mindful approach to supporting the development of educational leaders throughout their professional careers is critical to those who aspire to educational leadership and those who comprise the ranks of current administrative positions. How the phases of the pipeline are enacted, and the quality of these experiences, serve as a message to candidates and practitioners alike. How we recruit, prepare, induct, and develop educational leaders may influence the expectations of and commitment levels to the profession of candidates and practitioners alike, and ultimately may affect our ability to recruit and retain those who are most capable.”

This report focuses primarily on components one and four of the pipeline – ensuring we have clear and up-to-date leadership standards that define the expectations for our school leaders and using strong support and evaluation systems to insure leader effectiveness and continued growth over time.

We see the development and implementation work of a strong leadership effectiveness system as the shared responsibility of states and districts. However, this report is directed at the state level.


18 For more information on The Wallace Foundation’s Knowledge Center, visit http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/Pages/default.aspx#tabs=1.

19 Hitt et al., 2012.
States are in a unique position to provide resources and models for districts. Rather than using valuable resources to develop models district by district, the state can share models of best practices around each of the lessons shared in this report.

II. THE LESSONS

This report shares lessons learned about how states and districts can work together to agree upon and widely communicate what they expect from their school leaders. Increased teacher effectiveness and improved student outcomes are the result of the implementation of standards-based systems of support and evaluation of school leaders throughout their careers.

LESSON ONE: Develop a Common Understanding of the Role of School Leader

Education has many different stakeholder communities, including students, their parents, other community members, policymakers, and department of education personnel, among others. The lens through which these different communities view school leadership depends on their own experiences, their breadth of knowledge, and their beliefs. Many individuals base their notions of leadership and schooling on their own experiences in K-12 schools. Yet both schools and school leadership have changed dramatically. As discussed in the first section of this report, both the work of school leadership and expectations concerning their performance have shifted significantly. It is essential that all education stakeholders understand the evolving demands and their implications for leader effectiveness in today’s educational context.

Why is this Important?

The fact that most Americans attended a public school at some time in their life can serve as a significant barrier to developing an understanding of contemporary school leadership. If stakeholder communities hold outdated and divergent conceptions of school leadership or place value on different responsibilities, it makes it very difficult for leaders to focus their efforts. It also makes it difficult for those who develop, support, and evaluate leaders to effectively carry out their responsibilities. A common understanding of school leadership, based upon the current educational realities and responsibilities, is fundamental to the development of leadership standards. Moreover, a common understanding is essential to the design and implementation of an effective development and evaluation system.

Advice from New York City Schools

Maria Esponda of New York City reminds us that the goal is to build coherence around common language and understanding.

It is important to make the development process district dependent and include a range of perspectives such as union partners, principals, principal supervisors, private partners, state, and higher education. In addition to having a diverse group of partners participating in the development process, it is critical to gather a “spectrum of experience” from first year principals to veteran principals. A principal’s first year is very different from his third or sixth year.

Implications

States are in an ideal position to support the development of common understanding around
school leadership. States should capitalize on their ability to convene cross-district conversations and develop and share resources. To develop a common understanding of school leadership practice, states might consider 1) holding facilitated conversations focused on building a common understanding about the principal’s and other leaders’ roles in the changing educational landscape and the ever-changing context of school leadership, and 2) developing processes and discussion guides for district-based conversations focused on building common understanding about school leadership.

Educational stakeholders must develop and work from a common understanding of effective school leadership in today’s context.

Facilitated Conversations

Facilitated conversations could be held at the state and local levels around the changing nature of educational leadership. State education agencies (SEAs) can play a significant role in fostering such conversations by developing and disseminating protocols for facilitated discussions. Such protocols might include

- A list of different stakeholder groups
- Guidelines for facilitating collaborative conversations
- A set of questions or prompts designed to explore how the role of different school leaders has changed over time
- A set of questions or prompts designed to explore changes in the educational environment that have implications for school leadership (e.g., CCSS)

In sum, in order for leadership development and evaluation systems to support effective school leadership, educational stakeholders must develop and work from a common understanding of effective school leadership in today’s context.

LESSON TWO: Design Standards to Address Leadership Needs of Individual District Contexts

Professional standards for school leaders identify the taproots and foundational aspects of leadership practice. Such standards are essential to the development of a common understanding about “what counts” as strong educational leadership. However, the complexity of schools and school systems also requires that each individual school leader engage in actions appropriate for the unique school context in which s/he works. Thus it is important that states support the ability of schools and districts in tailoring professional standards to reflect the needs of local schools and communities.

High quality standards-based preparation, ongoing professional learning, and personal experiences provide school leaders with knowledge of effective practices. Knowing which practices to employ and when to employ them requires a combination of standards-based preparation and professional judgment. Just as effective teachers’ decisions should be based on knowledge of
students, effective school leaders must carefully choose their actions based upon their deep knowledge of the school and the contexts surrounding that school.

Why Is This Important?

Educational leadership standards should anchor the practice of school leaders, but standards should be written, implemented, and evaluated in ways that consider and appreciate the different contexts in which school leaders must work. This consideration and appreciation for differences in context will naturally lead to differences in how school leaders’ actions apply to those different contexts – and how their actions are expressed in a standards-based format. For example, the activities in which a typical leader of a large high school engages as an instructional leader will be different than the leader of a small, rural elementary school. The high school leader might guide instruction through sharing leadership with content department heads and team meetings, while the leader of a smaller school might lead instruction through classroom visits and the instructional coaching of individual teachers. Both school leaders could be demonstrating instructional leadership appropriate for their situation.

Implications

Personnel in SEAs and district offices must appreciate the importance of the context in which school leaders work. It is essential that states consider the wide range of contexts in which school leaders might work when establishing licensure requirements as well as when designing leadership development and evaluation processes. Such consideration must also be applied to the approval of educational leadership preparation programs. To ensure that standards address the leadership needs of individual district contexts, states might consider the following strategies:

1) facilitating conversations and analyses focused on understanding the needs of individual schools and districts, and 2) developing case examples reflecting the nature of contemporary school leadership.

Facilitated Conversations and Analyses

Needs analyses could be undertaken at both the district and school levels to better understand the specific educational leadership needs of a given context. SEAs can play a significant role in

Advice from Charlotte-Mecklenburg

Rashidah Morgan of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) tells us that the district began with a state mandated principal evaluation instrument, which was informed by the seven standards of executive leadership from McREL and grounded in ISLLC. CMS spent their time examining the purpose of standards and competencies and how they translated into a CMS leadership framework.

With a cross-functional team focused on school leadership, including principals and assistant principals, they explored the competencies that were essential to being a successful leader in CMS. These competencies were then aligned to the executive leadership standards. These competencies were used to inform selection and hiring practices, principal preparation program selection and recruiting, and professional development for school leaders. Additionally, CMS developed indicators that provided guidance on the behaviors that principal supervisors would look for as a demonstration of the leadership standards.

Importantly, these indicators help provide clarity and consistency to school leaders and their managers during the evaluation process.
fostering such conversations by developing and disseminating needs analysis protocols.

Once a needs analysis has been conducted, it will be important for district and school communities to share this information and discuss implications for the identification, employment, development, and evaluation of educational leaders. The suggestions provided for facilitated discussions under lesson one are appropriate for this lesson as well.

**School Leadership Cases**

Although there are numerous elements common to effective leadership, how leadership is enacted often looks different in one context than another. For example, school leadership in a large urban high school will have elements that resemble school leadership in a rural K-12 building, but there will also be significant differences. The development of case examples reflecting what leadership effectiveness looks like in a variety of educational settings within the state can facilitate an understanding of how context matters.

District and state personnel should collaborate with practicing educational leaders and professional organizations such as school boards associations, educational leadership organizations, and other associations to ensure that everyone understands and appreciates the changing expectations for school leaders and their leadership teams as well as the wide variety of contexts in which they work. Understanding the new expectations must be followed by policies and practices that provide support to aspiring and practicing school leaders that ensure they develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to meet these new expectations.

When using national and/or state standards to guide decisions concerning school leadership, it is essential that states and districts consider the needs of local contexts. Thus, when establishing data collection and reporting requirements concerning school leadership, states must be cognizant of the different school contexts and the effect of these reporting requirements on data collection efforts as well as inferences and interpretations based upon the data.

Furthermore, in order to help newly-hired principals and assistant principals acclimate to their new responsibilities, districts should include information about school, community, and state contexts as part of an orientation to work responsibilities. Districts should also provide professional learning opportunities to reduce any gaps in knowledge or skill between a leader’s skill set and the skills necessary for him/her to be effective in the school context in which they work. Professional learning opportunities for school leaders offered through the district, professional organizations, or private providers should be organized and designed with an understanding of the wide variety of contexts in which teachers work.

**LESSON THREE: Follow a Well-Conceived and Collaborative Process to Develop/Adapt Standards and Keep Them Relevant**

Leadership standards play an integral role in informing and guiding the development and continuous improvement of all aspects of school leadership practice throughout the career continuum. To build a common understanding of educational leadership and contextually relevant standards, as described in Lessons One and
Two, it is imperative that stakeholders follow a well-conceived and collaborative process. This is important not only in the initial development, but also in the regular update of state leadership standards. Implementing such a process will help to ensure the standards remain relevant and inform quality instructional leadership practice regardless of contextual changes in the educational environment. Districts follow a similar collaborative process when they tailor the state standards to meet their individualized contexts.

State leadership standards must be based on the state’s common understanding and/or vision of effective leadership and include commentary on the purpose of leadership standards and the role they play in supporting leadership practice. This common understanding/vision can motivate stakeholders to respond to a current need, such as changing state or federal education policy, as well as to ensure the alignment between the different elements of the school leadership pipeline and the roles of other leadership personnel in the school and district.

State leadership standards are best developed or revised through the same collaborative effort used to create a common understanding around school leadership, where the state, district, school (leadership teams and teachers), parents, and community stakeholders come together to develop/revise standards that address the common definition of effective leadership. School leadership teams and district personnel are especially equipped to share their on-the-ground knowledge and experience in working with the state in drafting/revising a set of standards that will speak to aspiring and practicing school leaders. By virtue of this collaborative development process, ownership and communication efforts will be facilitated. In addition, a common language is developed which aids the development of transparent and easy to understand standards.

Advice from Gwinnett County

Gwinnett County Public Schools’ Glenn Peteth described their leadership standards development as an extension of work that began over seven years ago when they asked, “What are the knowledge, skills, and competencies of effective leaders?” Gwinnett wanted to narrow their focus and get a more clearly defined set of standards.

Gwinnett County stakeholders worked with James Stronge from the College of William and Mary to explore the qualities of effective principals. Through a series of leadership seminars offered by the Quality Plus Leader Academy, Gwinnett’s umbrella for leadership development programs, school leaders received training from James Stronge in the application of leadership standards. This training ensured that leaders were demonstrating key behaviors that increased their effectiveness, resulting in student achievement gains. In addition, school leaders were provided reading materials aligned to leadership standards that served as a resource for continuous quality improvement. In this collaborative learning process, district level leaders and principal supervisors engaged in leader standards training to gain a clear understanding of their role in developing and effectively evaluating school leaders.

Gwinnett’s design influenced standards development work at the state level, which has led to the state’s adoption of leader standards and indicators.
Why Is This Important?

Without common national or state leadership standards it is difficult for states to communicate their understanding and expectations of effective leadership. Standards establish the bar that defines and pushes individual leadership practice and performance. In addition, standards serve as the underpinning of high quality leader preparation programs and drive school leader evaluation and professional learning systems. Without clearly defined and articulated leadership standards it will be impossible to achieve the goal of having an effective leader in each and every school.

Implications

In developing or revising state leadership standards based on an agreed upon common understanding/vision of effective leadership, it is important for each state to gather a diverse group of stakeholders to 1) review and analyze the state’s current standards (if the state already has them) or study other state and district standards that might align with the state’s common understanding/vision; 2) gain stakeholder and/or expert input at each stage of the development/revision process; 3) draft or revise standards based on stakeholder input and consider how each standard can be measured and what will be used as evidence of mastery; 4) communicate and pilot standards use; 5) develop a process to continually monitor the use and effectiveness of the standards; 6) create a feedback loop to help inform revisions; and 7) set a timeline for periodic reviews and revisions.

States and districts will demonstrate joint ownership of the new standards and their implementation and ongoing revision process by the following efforts:

States

- Initiate the process of developing/revising state leadership standards to ensure their relevance to supporting leadership practice in today’s educational context.
- Invite pertinent stakeholders to work together on a collaborative development/revision process.
- Lay out a viable process to develop leadership standards and redesign/update them in the future in order to keep them current and responsive to the ongoing changes in the education context.
- Develop implementation guidelines for districts to use in applying new leadership standards to each area of the principal pipeline.

Districts

- Engage with the state in a collaborative development/revision process.
- Provide strong examples or evidence of mastering each standard and its indicators.
- Personalize state leadership standards to their own context.
- Provide ongoing professional learning to assist school and district leaders as they strive to continuously improve their leader effectiveness.

LESSON FOUR: Ensure Leadership Standards Drive Each Component of the Leadership Pipeline

The purpose of leadership standards is to communicate a common understanding/vision of leadership collaboratively developed by the state and its districts. The standards articulate the separate and composite leader behaviors that result in effective school leadership. They also provide the definitional consistency necessary to provide and sustain the strong level of leadership that must be present in all schools and districts. States and districts that have developed leadership standards have used them to
inform preparation, recruitment, selection, evaluation, and development. The leadership standards and their associated functions, elements, and indicators provide a common language needed to convey the common understanding/vision of leadership. What matters most is that key stakeholders understand and communicate how standards articulate effective leadership practice at each stage of the career continuum.

As mentioned earlier in this report, the DPS Public Schools Framework for Effective School Leadership Evidence Guide is a striking example of an alternative way to think about the work of school leaders across their career continuum. This framework, based on both the ISLLC and Colorado State Leadership Standards, outlines the new performance expectations for school level leaders in the DPS District and is used within the DPS-University of Denver principal preparation program for aspiring school leaders. The DPS expectations and indicators include

1. **Culture and Equity Leadership**
   a. Leads for equity toward college and career readiness
   b. Leads for culture of empowerment, continuous improvement and celebration

2. **Instructional Leadership**
   a. Leads for high-quality, data-driven instruction by building the capacity of teachers to lead and perfect their craft.
   b. Leads for the academic and social-emotional success of all students (linguistically diverse, students with disabilities, gifted and talented, historically under-achieving students).
   c. (ELA Program School Leaders): Leads for effective English Language Acquisition programming.

3. **Human Resource Leadership**
   a. Identifies, develops, retains and dismisses staff in alignment with high expectations for performance.
   b. Applies teacher and staff performance management systems in a way that ensures a culture of continuous improvement, support and accountability

4. **Strategic Leadership**
   a. Leads the school’s Vision, Mission and Strategic Goals to support college readiness for all students
   b. Distributes leadership to inspire change in support of an empowered school culture

5. **Organizational Leadership**
   a. Strategically aligns people, time and money to drive student achievement
   b. Ensures effective communications with and between all staff and stakeholders

6. **External Leadership**
   a. Actively advocates for members of the school community and effectively engages family and community
   b. Demonstrates professionalism and continuous professional growth

**Why Is This Important?**

Ultimately, leadership standards serve as the through-line to student learning and achievement and the effective management of human capital across the career continuum. When leadership standards are in place, school leaders are clear about what is expected of them. Arguably, this clarity provides the most important condition for a school leader to thrive. Additionally, it is important that aspiring principals, assistant principals, and other school leaders have an understanding of what
would be expected of them once they step into the role. Lastly, it is important that principal supervisors have a strong grasp of the common understanding/ vision of school leadership so that how they evaluate and support school leaders aligns with the leadership standards.

Implications
Leadership standards form the basis of leadership support and evaluation systems by setting the expectations for school leader performance. States and districts must work together to support school leaders as they work to meet this new set of expectations. Many districts that developed their own leadership standards believe that support to their leaders should be year-long and personalized.

States and districts demonstrate joint support of a strong standards-based leadership pipeline by the following efforts:

- States
  - Provide guidance or parameters to develop and implement standards that can be adopted or adapted. For example a model framework that includes all aspects of the pipeline (e.g., preparation, recruitment, selection, development, and evaluation) would be particularly useful.
  - Write the standards with the multiple purposes of pipeline (e.g., preparation, recruitment, selection, development, and evaluation) in mind.
  - Offer a simple framework for using standards throughout the educational leadership pipeline, particularly to inform growth.

- Districts
  - Develop, adopt, or adapt standards with the multiple purposes of pipeline in mind.
  - Articulate the evidence of meeting the standards in various aspects of the pipeline and role.
  - Work with states to develop case studies of standards-based leadership practice highlighting each stage of the leadership pipeline.

LESSON FIVE: Individualize Evaluation and Support for School Leader Professional Growth and Development

Given the increasingly complex and important roles and responsibilities of educational leaders, it is critical that school leaders receive ongoing, individualized support for professional growth and leadership development. Although expectations for school leadership effectiveness are fairly consistent across school contexts, leadership development needs are not. Each school leader has specific and personalized leadership development needs,
which are dependent on the context of the school community and the individual leader’s experiential base, knowledge, and skills.

The role of the district is paramount to providing individualized support to school level leaders. It is essential that district leaders recognize this responsibility and work to understand the developmental needs of each school level leader and then use that understanding to devise ways to support those leaders in achieving the expectations of new leadership standards — from instructional leadership to managerial operations.

Why Is This Important?

No two students are the same. No two teachers are the same. No two communities are the same. No two schools are the same. Thus, a one-size fits all model of leadership or leadership development is inappropriate. Leaders must have an opportunity to develop knowledge and skills that will support their success within the context in which they are serving. Their professional learning opportunities must be customized to their needs.

Furthermore, without ongoing, systemic support, a leader’s skills will become irrelevant, outdated, and ineffective. The educational landscape is ever-changing. Research-based practices have replaced charismatic managerial efforts. Strategic planning has replaced informal brainstorming sessions. The skill set a school leader and his or her leadership team require to remain effective will change over time. All school leaders must continuously hone their skills to be current strategic practitioners who make data-informed decisions about the direction, vision, and mission of a school. Without relevant, rigorous, ongoing, and individualized professional learning, school leaders may be ill-equipped to provide the high quality leadership our nation’s students and teachers deserve.

Implications

Although districts are directly responsible for developing and evaluating school level leaders, states should embrace the idea that growing and developing leaders is both a state and district level responsibility. States need to encourage and support district initiatives to evaluate leaders, to understand their professional learning needs, and to build leadership capacity at the school level.

There are a number of important steps that states can take in providing support to districts in this area. To ensure adequate attention and support is dedicated to this issue, states should designate an individual to provide support to district leadership personnel who are responsible for the professional learning of schools leaders. Furthermore, in districts where size and/or resources prohibit the designation of a staff member to oversee leader development and evaluation, states should step in to provide that assistance. In addition to the direct support provided through such positions, they also provide a vehicle for accountability, fidelity of implementation, and more supportive and positive relationships.

Furthermore, states should support and encourage effective supervision, evaluation, and support of school level leaders by providing continuous professional learning opportunities for district leaders. This could include the following:

- A framework for ongoing, effective communication with school and community stakeholders regarding the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of school leaders.
Not only can states develop policies that bolster and encourage continuous professional growth and development, states can become more directly engaged by collaborating with districts, universities, and professional organizations to provide professional development that is reflective of an established blueprint for school leaders and those who supervise them — ensuring that professional development is job embedded and relevant to the needs of the leader as well as his or her school, district, and community.

The state's primary role of support is to provide guidance and resources for districts and to increase the quality of each district's ongoing communication, direction, and support to its school leaders. Developing and recommending systems and processes that articulate a vision for ongoing professional learning could effectively carry out such a role. In the spirit of continuous improvement, states can institute and formalize

**Enhancing Capacity for Standards-Based Leadership Evaluation: State and District Roles**

- A blueprint for school leadership evaluation
- A planning guide for individualized professional learning
- A template for professional learning plans
- Ongoing financial and human resources to ensure districts' capacity to offer high quality and professional learning opportunities
- Coaching protocols
- Regional training forums for district personnel charged with school leadership evaluation and development
- Ongoing statewide forums for district personnel to explore common ground understandings about school leadership evaluation and development and to share resources and promising practices

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**Advice from Denver**

John Youngquist from DPS tells us that the implementation of leader competencies, locally referred to as the DPS School Leadership Framework or the Framework, informs the work of recruitment, selection, evaluation, and development for Denver's leaders and aspiring leaders.

Recruitment and selection are guided by the competencies through position postings and the implementation of screening, interviewing, and reference processes that are specifically designed to inform us about the specific strengths and weaknesses of each candidate — in alignment with the Framework.

The evaluation of our leaders is informed by the documentation of behaviors that represent effectiveness on the Framework, and, soon, the application of student growth data. Professional learning opportunities, like seminars and coaching, are defined by the language of the competencies and engaged in with the interest in developing skills and abilities that are related to specific framework areas.

In addition to these efforts, the Framework drives the curriculum and evaluation of Denver's principal residency program. Stories have been documented about the growth of the residents by using the "Individual Leadership Compact" that residents develop and continually revise. The compact identifies the strengths and gaps of the resident using competencies. The Individual Leadership Compact becomes the story of their residency and growth.

The Framework guides all of the work of the pipeline and provides us with a common language with which to identify, evaluate, and develop our school leaders.
strategies and measures and document outreach to districts that foster open and ongoing communications between the district and the state whereby bolstering a positive and supportive relationship/partnership and modeling for states the type of relationship that should exist between districts and their school leaders.

LESSON SIX: Focus the Work of Principal Supervisors on Development and Evaluation

The principal supervisor is key to effective and individualized leadership development and evaluation. As currently defined in large districts, this position is primarily responsible for directly overseeing and evaluating school leaders. Given the importance of leadership teams, a conversation about the scope of the supervisor’s role and whether it should focus on an individual leader or a leadership team is warranted. To maximize the supervisor’s role, it is critical to define the role and responsibilities of the position, to develop support and evaluation systems for school level leaders, and to ensure that supervisors have a manageable caseload.

Why Is This Important?

Just as it is important to develop a common understanding/vision of school leadership, it is important to develop a common understanding of the role and responsibilities of the individual who will develop and evaluate school leadership. Such a common understanding should serve as an anchor for an effective development and evaluation system.

Advice from Prince George’s County

Douglas Anthony, Lorraine Madala, and Pamela Shetley from Prince George’s County School District agree that what’s important in establishing effective principal supervisors in a district is clearly defining the role to all stakeholders. Equally important is creating a framework that aligns the leader standards to the structure of support for and evaluation of the principals with the work of the principal supervisor. Creating uniformity in how a principal supervisor approaches his/her work, engages their principals, and leverages resources to build principal capacity ensures that alignment is present. Ultimately, the district executive leadership has to create the conditions, space, and time for principal supervisors to develop and build principal capacity.

An individual school leader is often expected to act as both an instructional leader and an operations manager. His/her daily duties can be overwhelming and without support, it can be impossible to carry through. With access to a principal supervisor, each school leader should be provided with the support, resources, tailored professional development, and an ally within the district office. Thus, this role helps to build capacity within the school and school district and ensures that school leaders are not alone or under-resourced as they work to support the learning and development of all students within their schools.

Implications

States should encourage districts to have persons designated as principal supervisors or whose roles include supervision and support of principals. Clearly, it may not be feasible for smaller districts
with fewer resources to add a full time principal supervisor position to their district leadership team, but it is necessary for the districts to designate someone to include the supervision and support of principals within their scope of work. This should help ensure that principals are evaluated according to standards and processes that were developed and approved by their state and district. It should also ensure relevant development and support for school leaders as they carry out their duties.

A common definition of the purpose of the supervisor and the role that an individual plays within their specific districts is needed. The purpose of the role can be defined through a set of standards or expectations created by the state derived from a collaborative discussion with current school leaders and existing principal supervisors. Profiles of what the principal supervisor role looks like within various districts, both large and small, and procedures and criteria for the selection of principal supervisors or those that assume principal supervisory and support roles and responsibilities would also be useful. At a minimum, principal supervisors should have experience as leaders within schools as well as experience related to increasing student performance.

States and districts should also consider resources provided to principal supervisors within their districts depending on the individual district’s personalized needs. For example, a principal supervisor in a large district may need additional support staff (clerical, operations staff, curriculum specialists) to assure that they are providing enough support to school level leaders. In addition to support staff, states and districts should also determine the caseload of the principal supervisor.

This will also vary depending on the district size and their individual needs. For smaller districts, states and districts can work together to build networks of support where several smaller districts come together to develop, support, and cost-share supervisory and support services for their school level leaders. Such services could be contracted through regional education centers, collaboratives, professional associations, or other educational leadership providers. For rural or remote districts, these service entities could offer virtual online support.

Finally a set of criteria should be created to guide the development of role descriptions as well as the selection of qualified candidates to serve as principal supervisors. Key areas to consider are:

- Instructional expertise (e.g., previous successful leadership)
- Leadership—specifically, ability to structure their offices and make clear to school leaders who their point of contact is for various instructional/human capital/operational needs and issues
- Ability to provide school leaders with formative/actionable feedback and guidance that will allow them to improve their practice
- Ability to oversee group meetings with school leaders that are collaborative
- Ability to build strong, collaborative relationships not only with school level leaders but also with human resources, curriculum and instruction, other district office departments, and stakeholders

The newly developed role descriptions and selection criteria will also provide a strong
foundation for the development of principal supervisor goals, indicators of effectiveness, and a principal supervisor evaluation instrument and continuous growth plan.

III. IMPROVING STANDARDS-BASED LEADERSHIP EVALUATION

As stated on page 3 of Education Counsel’s 2013 Teacher and Leader Evaluation Roadmap report, “Educator evaluation is not an end in itself but rather a policy foundation for developing, identifying, and supporting effective educators.”

The key lessons presented in this report, Enhancing Capacity for Standards-Based Leadership Evaluation: State and District Roles, emphasize the importance of developing and working from a common understanding of effective school leadership in today’s context. The lessons, which align with the framework developed by Education Counsel, articulate the importance of establishing strong foundations for action, establishing systems for use of the evaluation, and ensuring effective implementation and continuous improvement.

Evaluation instruments are only as effective as the systems within which they are used. Without the other framework components a principal evaluation tool is less likely to improve leader practice, particularly leadership practice that results in continuous school improvement, and that supports the highest levels of student learning and the most impactful teacher instructional practice.

The Education Counsel’s draft report, Teacher and Leader Evaluation Roadmap, for state and local action provides a framework for establishing new systems of educator evaluation across four major elements:

1. Establish foundations for action
2. Design evaluation instruments
3. Establish systems for the use of evaluations
4. Ensure effective implementation and continuous improvement

Through the six lessons introduced in this report, we remind states that they need to play a critical role in supporting the development and effective evaluation of educational leaders. States can do this by

• Advocating for the adoption of a common set of leadership standards that reflect the changing nature of educational leadership practice and the new demands on educational leaders.

• Articulating the purpose and uses of leadership standards.

• Working with districts to develop systems that facilitate the use of leadership standards to drive each component of the leadership pipeline from initial tapping through preparation, practice, development, and evaluation.

• Supporting the further contextualization of standards to effectively meet district leadership needs by laying out a viable leadership standards development process and a process to redesign/update leadership standards in the future in order to keep them current and responsive to the ongoing changes in the education context.

• Working with districts to provide support to leaders in achieving the expectations of new leadership standards. In fact, states should provide examples of tools that can support the new expectations.

• Working with districts to define the role of principal supervisor as key to effective leadership evaluation and development. Furthermore, states should work with districts to develop evaluation and support systems for this individual, and determine a manageable supervisory caseload for each supervisor.

• Considering how districts, and in particular district level staff, should be held accountable for the effective development, evaluation, and practice of school-level leaders.

• Considering how their state department staff should be held accountable for district and school level leadership effectiveness.

As states and districts work together to build a robust and relevant educational leadership pipeline, they should ensure that they communicate and coordinate their efforts. It would be useful to begin the partnership with a discussion as to the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of all constituents and to articulate a vision, mission, goals, objectives, outcomes, etc., for their partnership. It is essential that states and districts share a common vision and language for describing effective school leadership and the processes and structures developed to support educational leadership in the state. Subsequently, efforts should be made to schedule regular conversations to review checkpoints, progress, developments, and data — and to revise the leadership effectiveness system accordingly.