

NASBE

Discussion Guide

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School Leadership

Improving State Systems for Leader Development



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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
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School Leadership: Improving State Systems for Leader Development

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School Leadership: Improving State Systems for Leader Development

“Quality leadership matters.”

— Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education, 2011 NASBE Legislative Conference

Pincipals in today’s schools have many roles. Ideally, principals are instructional leaders, are beacons of inspiration and direction for teachers and students in their schools, are able to create a professional learning community for teachers, have a firm grasp of assessments, and are able to navigate local, state, and federal policy to improve instruction and learning in the school. Effective leadership in schools has the ability to improve both student learning and school culture. Research consistently shows that aside from teachers, principals are one of the most important factors in ensuring that schools and students are successful.¹ Therefore, it is important for state boards to support school leaders through comprehensive leadership systems to ensure positive outcomes for all students, teachers and schools.

This NASBE School Leadership Discussion Guide, developed with support from The Wallace Foundation, is designed to give boards the tools to:

- Create a brief inventory of current leadership policies and supports;
- Assist board members in developing state-specific questions to work through on school leadership; and
- Help boards use these tools and questions to craft policy directions for the state.

It is based largely on the findings from the *Learning from Leadership Project: Investigating the Links to Improved Student Learning*, the largest in-depth study of school leadership to date (see textbox at right).² The Discussion Guide also draws from other school leadership reports commissioned by The Wallace Foundation, as well as previous NASBE briefs and other contemporary research on the issue. In addition, NASBE conducted a survey of state board members on issues boards are currently trying to address in school leadership for inclusion in the guide.

About the Learning from Leadership Research Study

The Learning from Leadership Research Study (the Study hereafter) was a six-year study begun in 2003 to examine school leadership practices at the school, district, and state levels that foster improvements in schools and student achievement. Commissioned by The Wallace Foundation, this Study is the only research on school leadership that is a nationally representative randomized sample that includes both statistical and case-study analysis. The Study gathered evidence and data from nine states that include 43 districts and 180 elementary and secondary schools varying on demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. In total, the Study surveyed 8,391 teachers and 471 administrators and principals and interviewed roughly 1,000 educators, stakeholders, and policymakers at various levels of education.

Source: Karen S. Louis, Kenneth Leithwood, Kyla L. Wahlstrom and Stephen E. Anderson et al., *Learning from Leadership Project: Investigating the Links to Improved Student Learning – Final Report of Research Findings*, (Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement/University of Minnesota and Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto, 2010).

The Discussion Guide has three sections:

1. **Background** (including the impact of school leaders on student achievement; high principal turnover rates and how this hurts schools; and what research tells us about effective leadership practices).

2. Key Elements of Effective School Leadership Systems (including state standards, principal training, professional development and other supports, and principal evaluation, as well as the importance of ensuring that all the elements work together as part of a Cohesive Leadership System).

3. School Leadership Discussion Worksheets (including one for each of the key elements).

1. BACKGROUND

In an era of increased accountability in education, it is important to understand the role that school leadership plays in student achievement—since principals are largely held responsible if a school is not meeting its academic goals. As the Study’s research revealed, school leadership has a significant impact on student achievement, but in indirect ways. School leadership has the ability to motivate both teachers and students in the school, as well as develop positive work environments for teachers. These two factors have a strong impact on student achievement.³ Research shows that principals play a critical role in the recruitment, development, and retention of teachers.⁴ Teachers routinely note that school leadership, specifically the principal, is the number one factor in deciding on staying at a school or leaving.⁵ The findings suggest that effective principals develop supportive environments for both teachers and students. These supportive environments promote increased student achievement and help keep teachers at schools. Given the impact school leadership can have on student outcomes, providing every school with an effective principal should clearly be among the top priorities for every school system.

However, there is a significant shortage of individuals willing *and able* to take on these tasks, especially in the most challenging schools and districts. For example, one of the models of reform within the federal school turnaround program is to replace the school principal. While this might seem like a reasonable option, a recent *New York Times* article noted there simply were not enough quality candidates to replace principals in struggling schools and many of the initial principals remained in their jobs.⁶ Nationally, almost half of superintendents report difficulty finding qualified *and* effective individuals to fill principal vacancies.⁷

Part of the problem is that almost 50 percent of principals leave within the first five years of starting, with a majority of these principals leaving within the first

three years. Principals routinely cite feeling like they are in a “sink-or-swim” situation with little support, being overworked, and spending a majority of their time on non-instructional tasks as reasons they leave the field.⁸ Other research shows that the increased pressure of accountability systems, expanded responsibilities within a school, and inadequate professional supports are the main reasons principals leave the education system.⁹ In addition, school leaders, especially principals, may leave a school because of promotion, retirement, poor performance, or even district rotation policies.

Frequent leadership turnover can have a devastating impact on student outcomes and school culture. The Study examined the role of succession of principals, regardless of reason, on conditions in the school and student achievement.

The textbox on page 5 describes one of the theories the Study used in its research, which holds that succession happens in distinct stages. Applying this theory to schools, implementation of reform efforts initiated by a new principal typically takes between three and five years to bear fruit.¹⁰ As such, principals spend a significant amount of time in their first year or two in a building assessing the state of the school and the practices of various entities within the school before making significant changes in line with their goals. However, the Study found the average principal stayed in the position for roughly three-and-a-half years, with principals leaving much earlier in the most challenging schools.¹¹ According to the “stages of succession” theory, it is unlikely initiatives of the principals in the Study produced positive results, which might have been a reason for some of them leaving.

Furthermore, in schools that experience extreme principal turnover, there is evidence that teachers and staff are less receptive to efforts of new principals and resistant to instructional changes championed by a new principal. Wallace research indicates that constant principal turnover negatively impacts school culture as well as classroom curriculum and instruction.¹² Teachers note a high turnover rate can make it extremely hard to implement consistent, uniform instructional change because practices advocated by one principal could be very different from those championed by the next principal. As a result, there is significantly less teacher buy-in for reforms in these schools. The Study notes that in these instances, a teacher “focuses on his or her classroom, works in relative isolation from colleagues, and takes responsibility only for his or her own work.”¹³ These findings highlight the importance of consistent, high-quality school leaders who remain in a school

Stages of Succession in an Organization

- 1. Taking Hold:** This phase includes a great deal of learning and initial actions. Learning revolves around orientation with the organization and evaluation of current practices. Action revolves around corrective measures of glaring issues that a leader sees based on previous experiences. This phase can last from three to six months.
- 2. Immersion:** In this phase, the leader becomes better informed on the issues and circumstances of the organization, but takes relatively little action. The leader absorbs as much information as possible while trying to figure out the best course of action. This phase can last anywhere from four to eleven months.
- 3. Reshaping:** Typically, major structural changes accompany this stage as the leader is acting on the collection of information gathered in the previous stage. This stage can last from three to six months.
- 4. Consolidation:** This is the first stage where evaluation of new leader initiatives is examined. The leader ideally troubleshoots what did not work to improve practice in the organization. The phase can last another three to nine months.
- 5. Refinement:** Completion of the succession process is marked by a leader being able to run the day-to-day operations of the business without having to spend significant time on major structural issues in the organization that require attention. From here, only minor changes and adjustments are made to practice.

Source: John J. Gabarro, *The Dynamics of Taking Charge*, (Harvard, MA, 1987), 14-15.

long enough to break through the barriers that prevent sustained improvement.

Effective Leadership Practices

Despite the challenges and lack of support most school leaders face, many principals persevere and succeed at improving outcomes across the board. Research provides insight on successful strategies for addressing challenges in the leadership support system. From this system, policymakers strive to develop and support effective school leaders. The Study examined the ongoing activities and behaviors of leaders to determine what distinguished high-rated from low-rated leaders based on both student outcome data and teacher surveys.¹⁴ As policymakers review their school leadership policies and/or use the discussion guide worksheets found later in this document, they should keep in mind the following three findings from the Study and consider how their leadership system can foster these practices in principals.

- 1. High-rated leaders have a deep understanding of teaching and learning that goes on in their schools:** Leaders that were highly rated take an active role in the instruction occurring in classes

and serve as a resource for teachers who are having trouble with specific lessons.

- 2. High-rated leaders have direct and frequent interactions with teachers, especially in providing relevant feedback on teaching practices:** Regardless of the number of interactions and observations that a leader has with a teacher, the most significant distinction between a high-rated leader and a low-rated leader is the amount of constructive feedback and formative assessment information a principal provides to a teacher as a result of these observations. These practices help a teacher refine instruction. Low-rated leaders rarely provide feedback on observations and use them primarily for year-end evaluations without giving any support or guidance on how to improve.
- 3. High-rated leaders have the ability and skill to help teachers progress and grow:** The better leaders provide differentiated opportunities for teachers to grow in the field. These opportunities can vary by school to accommodate the school culture, but it is important to provide teachers with the support and options necessary to grow as a professional educator.

One should note that the use of “leader” in this context is not limited to just principals. The Study acknowledged that in middle and high school settings it is extremely difficult for principals to be instructional and content experts in all subjects taught there. As a result, department heads play a crucial role in secondary schools as instructional leaders for teachers.¹⁵ Regardless of where teachers get their instructional guidance and support, they need leaders who apply the above practices to feel supported and have the guidance necessary to improve student achievement.

Developing effective principals is a complex issue and there are many challenges to creating a leadership support system that accomplishes this goal. The following section examines the primary elements of state leadership systems that are key to meeting these challenges, as well as providing examples of states that have made significant progress in these areas.

2. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP: KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL SYSTEMS

Element 1. State Standards

Quality state leadership standards are clearly an important place to start in developing effective principals. School leadership standards should be a set of goals for principals to work on continuously so they can be more effective in their positions, not a single end point to check off for initial licensure. Many states have adopted some form of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards that were revised in 2008. ISLLC standards use a continuum of competencies based on a number of criteria related to effective leadership. These standards ideally help aspiring school leaders and experienced school leaders alike refine and hone their skills relevant to their job and continually assist them in improving student learning. The standards provide a framework of competencies in a variety of content and pedagogical areas and a progression based on experience.

The bad news is that while 46 states have adopted or adapted the ISLLC standards,¹⁶ support and evaluation systems for principals do not typically map back to these standards. Research indicates that principal training programs, professional development programs, and principal evaluation systems vary significantly in their alignment with state leadership standards,¹⁷ and many programs do not require individuals to demonstrate competency in these

standards.¹⁸ The lack of coordination between these different actors within the school leadership system severely inhibits the ability of state leadership standards to take hold regardless of their quality. Fortunately, there are several states that have successfully integrated standards into all aspects of the support system for school leadership.

For example, Connecticut and Delaware officials worked to integrate state standards into all aspects of the leadership support system, including accreditation of preparation programs, licensing and certification of administrators, professional development requirements and administrator evaluations. In both instances, the state worked with districts and universities to coordinate reform efforts. These efforts have shown to improve the focus of the various support systems for school principals by providing a coherent approach to school leadership.¹⁹ As state boards consider changes in school leadership systems, it is important to base these changes in the established leadership standards and provide mechanisms for the various leadership systems to demonstrate integration of these standards. Although states are making strides regarding integration of leadership standards, it remains true that principal training, professional development, and principal evaluation by themselves can also present challenges to consistently developing effective school leaders. However, there are states that effectively address these challenges as well, including Tennessee as described below.

State Example: Tennessee’s Learning Centered Leaders

Licensure is a powerful policy tool state boards can use to create change in the education system. Principal licensure policy impacts higher education’s principal preparation programs, as well as local and statewide professional development programs. Policymakers in Tennessee found their licensure system inadequately prepared principals for the challenges they face in schools and did not require principals to demonstrate competency in any of the state leadership standards after completion of a preparation program.²⁰ In response, in 2008 the Tennessee State Board of Education remade its leadership system into a cohesive, performance-based, tiered licensure system through its Learning Centered Leadership Policy

On the preparation side, in order to complete the school administration preparation program and achieve the initial Instructional Leader license, individuals must now accomplish the following during the program:

- Demonstrate competency in the Tennessee Instructional Leadership Standards (TILS), which are based on the ISLLC standards, though a portfolio of work;
- Develop a professional development plan;
- Complete a project that demonstrates an individual's ability to improve student learning and present the results to an evaluation panel; and
- Pass the School Leaders Licensure Assessment, an ETS exam based on ISLLC standards.²¹

The new policy also integrated competency-based performance into the professional development system. To advance to the next tier of license, an individual must be recommended by the director of the Tennessee Academy for School Leaders (TASL), the state's professional development program.²² TASL provides principals with knowledge of current research in cognitive science, skills to build professional learning communities, and how to use activities to effectively collaborate with stakeholders in the community. Tennessee requires principals to complete at least 28 hours of professional development every two years. All activities approved for credit are closely aligned to demonstrating competency in the TILS.²³ Given that the Leadership licenses are for five years, principals must participate in multiple cycles of professional development and continuously show progress on skills linked to student achievement and school improvement in order to be eligible for advancement.

The Tennessee State Board's policy for school leaders illustrates the various institutions and programs that need to work together to have a comprehensive, outcomes-based, school leadership system. The state board has the ability to provide the overarching vision to support these various entities in reaching a common goal. For additional information about the Tennessee Leadership Policy, visit the state's website at www.tennessee.gov/education/.

Element 2. Principal Training

In many states, a principal training program is the first interaction an aspiring principal has with a state's school leadership system. Ideally, these programs provide the skills and knowledge necessary for a candidate to successfully lead and manage a school. Unfortunately, many principals and superintendents believe these programs do not adequately prepare principals for the challenges they face in schools. According to a Public Agenda survey, almost 67 percent of principals reported

that these pre-service programs did not prepare them for the realities of leading a school.²⁴

Research indicates pre-service programs historically focus on managerial issues such as school law and administrative requirements, but fail to address topics needed for instructional leadership such as instructional strategies, curriculum, and supporting teachers' professional growth.²⁵ In addition, researchers and principals agree that pre-service programs often fail to provide the extensive clinical experience in schools that leaders should have to develop the practical skills needed to be successful.²⁶ These trends in principal preparation programs leave first-time principals at a disadvantage from the start. However, there are examples of effective training programs and certain patterns of practice emerge from these successful programs.

While not all training programs create effective leaders, there are common elements of successful principal training programs. As boards consider policy action in principal training, it is important to ensure policies support development of these elements. Findings from The Wallace-funded research report *Preparing School Leaders for a Changing World* identified these elements of high-quality principal training programs:

- **Curricula focused on instructional improvement.** Aspiring principals developed skills needed to evaluate school curricula, use data to examine student needs, collaborate with teachers and develop a culture of high-quality teaching and learning.²⁷
- **Strong links between coursework and practice.** The standout programs used techniques such as problem-based learning and professional reflection to prepare principals.²⁸
- **Emphasis on extensive internship experiences.** The best training programs provided internships that were more than just observations in schools. They gave individuals the ability to apply knowledge learned in a structured and supported internship throughout a school year.²⁹

State Example: Mississippi's Accreditation Initiative for Preparation Programs

Program accreditation is a tool state boards of education can use to improve the quality of principal training programs. Noticing the amount of variability in quality of principals coming from preparation programs, Mississippi required all school administration programs to reapply for accreditation in the early

1990s while simultaneously raising accreditation standards for the programs. Further, all programs needed to become nationally accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and demonstrate how the program aligned with state administrator standards. Initially, no principal training program passed accreditation. Many programs had to significantly reform their entire principal training approach and pedagogy to become accredited.

Research indicates these reform efforts have improved the school leadership system in the state. Compared to the nation, Mississippi principals report being better prepared for the challenges they face in schools as a result of the preparation program they attended in the state.³⁰ In addition, Mississippi now has one of the nation's top principal training programs, Delta State University. Despite failing the initial reaccreditation process, Delta State, a public institution, now provides one of the most comprehensive educational leadership programs in the country by providing a full-time paid internship with the local district, coursework that complements the internship, mentors from local schools and a curriculum developed by local superintendents.³¹ These changes in outcomes and preparation programs would not have been possible without the state's use of program accreditation as a tool for change in the leadership system.

Element 3. Professional Development and other Supports

Once a principal enters a school, support systems such as mentoring and professional development should be in place to help individuals progress as a leader and available to lend assistance and guidance through challenging times. Unfortunately, instead of a coherent program that aligns with state standards, one study found that principal professional development opportunities were based more on "whims, fads, opportunism and ideology" than sound research and that while participation rates were high, it rarely lead to any changes in practice that had an impact on student achievement.³² In addressing principal professional development, there are two main areas that boards need to consider: support for novice principals and support for veteran principals.

The support needs of an entering principal are very different from the development needs of a 10-year veteran principal. Translating book knowledge into practice, acclimating to the workload and expectations for a principal, and understanding a school's organizational culture are some of the challenges that

a new principal confronts. While many states have well-defined induction and mentoring programs for new teachers, fewer states have high-quality mentor programs for principals. Roughly half of the states have principal mentor programs, but mentor knowledge of how to help novice principals develop a vision of leadership for school growth is limited and in many cases amounts to little more than a "buddy" system. Unfortunately, principal mentors typically receive limited training and the trainings routinely focus on regulation compliance more than cultivating strong, supported relationships with principal mentees.³³ As a result, many mentoring programs provide limited support for principals and guidance on how to effectively lead a school.³⁴

Effective mentoring has the ability to provide novice principals with the opportunity to discuss challenges of the job with a veteran, to collaborate and problem solve with peers and to provide support at a critical juncture in a principal's career.³⁵ While only half of states have principal mentoring programs, this represents a significant growth since 2000 when only a handful of states required new principals participate in a mentoring program. As a result of this progress, three recommended guidelines emerged from the Wallace Perspective titled *Getting Principal Mentoring Right: Lessons from the Field* when boards consider developing effective mentoring programs:

- High quality training for mentors is necessary;
- Data about the efficacy of mentoring programs changing behaviors is vital; and
- Support for new principals need to be at least one year and ideally is two or more years.³⁶

State Examples: Ohio and Tennessee

While there are currently no instances of a state implementing all of these recommended strategies, Ohio's Entry-Year Program for Principals exhibits many of the characteristics of ideal principal mentoring programs. Ohio requires all principals with the provisional two-year license to participate in the mentoring program as a requirement for the full professional five-year license. New principals develop a portfolio that shows their competency in each of the six ISLLC standards. Mentors work with new principals over a two year period and receive compensation for each individual that they work with. Goals of the program include developing collaboration with peers and providing structured problem solving for new principals.³⁷

For veteran principals, however, professional development and support needs are far different. Refining leadership abilities, managing ever-increasing workloads, and sustaining school improvement over time are some of the challenges that veteran principals face. However, research indicates that professional development programs for principals rarely differentiate career stages when providing support. As a result, principals consider the professional development they received as poorly connected to their specific circumstances.³⁸ Some principals note that principal peer networks provide more support than any formal professional development programs because they provide “sound-ing board(s)” for challenges principals jointly face while allowing for time to reflect on these issues. However, many of these ad-hoc peer networks typically stem from circumstance and need instead of emerging from professional development programs.³⁹

As mentioned previously, Tennessee exhibits a robust statewide professional development support system for principals that addresses some of these issues in supporting veteran principals. In addition to requiring 28 hours of professional development that is closely aligned to state leadership standards every two years as a part of relicensure, Tennessee’s central-ized delivery of professional development typically occurs over a two day period rather than a single ses-sion. This both assures content continuity in the state and provides principals the opportunity to engage and collaborate with peers in real-life challenges in a structured manner over a period of time.⁴⁰ As boards consider action in principal professional development, it is important to ensure development of exclusive structured time for veteran and novice principals, alike, to interact, discuss challenges and reflect on pos-sible solutions with peers.

Element 4. Principal Evaluation

Given the far-reaching impact principals have on their buildings, principals are routinely held ac-countable for performance within a school. However, systems to effectively evaluate school principals still lag behind other accountability efforts. In many states, district and state assessments of school leaders do not accurately and effectively capture state leader-ship standards, provide feedback for continuous professional development for an individual, or reflect the overall performance of a school in uniform and objective ways.⁴¹

A national study of state and district principal evalu-ation found that few principal evaluations are based

on principal behaviors or research-based strategies. Additionally, many principals felt the evaluations generally gave positive reviews, but provided little guidance on improving practice. Less than five percent of evaluations in one study included evaluation of a principal’s behavior on ensuring the school imple-ments a rigorous curriculum and only seven percent examine principals’ engagement with quality instruc-tion in schools.⁴² As a result, retention and promotion decisions for principals are being based on assess-ments that do not necessarily align with standards and practices known to facilitate effective leadership and improve student outcomes. Clearly, just knowing their schools’ student achievement scores does little to help principles improve. However, there are principal evaluations that effectively assess principals and ad-dress these issues.

Following are some of the attributes identified by Wallace-funded research that are exhibited by success-ful principal evaluations:

- Focus on observable behaviors;
- Are based on state leadership standards;
- Promote change necessary for school improvement;
- Are reliable and tested measures;
- Account for multiple contexts and circumstanc-es; and
- Are linked to professional development opportuni-ties to address shortcomings identified in assess-ment.⁴³

Connecticut’s principal evaluation system displays many of these qualities of successful elements. Connecticut uses data from the state performance assessment of principals to both assess the readi-ness of individual school leaders and to review and accredit training programs. The Connecticut Admin-istrator Test uses performance-based tasks, includ-ing videotapes of teaching, samples of student work and problem-solving scenarios for supporting a teacher to evaluate principals’ abilities. The state also holds preparation programs accountable for graduates’ performance by requiring 80 percent of the programs’ graduates to pass the test in order for the program to keep its accreditation. As a result of this requirement, Connecticut principals report they engaged in more problem-based learning in prepa-ration programs.⁴⁴

State Example: Principal Evaluations in Delaware

Delaware was one of the first states to develop an evaluation system that linked school administrators and principals to student performance and school improvement. Since 2008, all public school principals must participate in the Delaware Performance Appraisal System (DPAS II), the state evaluation system for education. The DPAS II specifically evaluates principals on the following five components based largely on the ISLLC standards:

- Goal-setting for the school using data;
- Management of resources;
- Developing, supporting and maintaining a culture of learning at the school;
- Promoting family and community involvement in the school; and
- Demonstrating improvements in achievement for students.⁴⁵

These components are all equally weighted and connected to student learning. The evaluations use both summative measures related to outcomes as well as formative measures designed to help a principal improve throughout the school year. Principals with three or more years of experience are evaluated on a two-year cycle, while less experienced principals are evaluated yearly.

The evaluation starts during the summer with goal setting within the context of a school's previous performance on measures such as statewide student assessments. Impartial evaluators gather information throughout the year on how these principals are performing in relation to the goals set at this meeting. Principals meet with the evaluators at least once during the school year to discuss progress toward the goals and receive feedback to improve practice. There is a meeting at the end of the year to discuss the evaluation and how the principal feels he or she did in achieving the goals set out in the beginning. Any principal who receives unsatisfactory ratings on any of the five components or who has an overall rating of needing improvement or ineffective must develop an improvement plan with the evaluator. One Delaware Department of Education official noted that these evaluations are not meant to be a "gotcha game" where results of the evaluation are a surprise. Goal setting at the beginning of the year and regular meetings

with the evaluator are meant to help principals work toward improving in lacking areas before the evaluations conclude at the end of the school year.⁴⁶

While research indicates there are limitations of the DPAS II for principals, including issues in documentation and accurately assessing overall performance of a school, the DPAS II illustrates how effective elements of a principal evaluation system can be integrated into a statewide assessment.

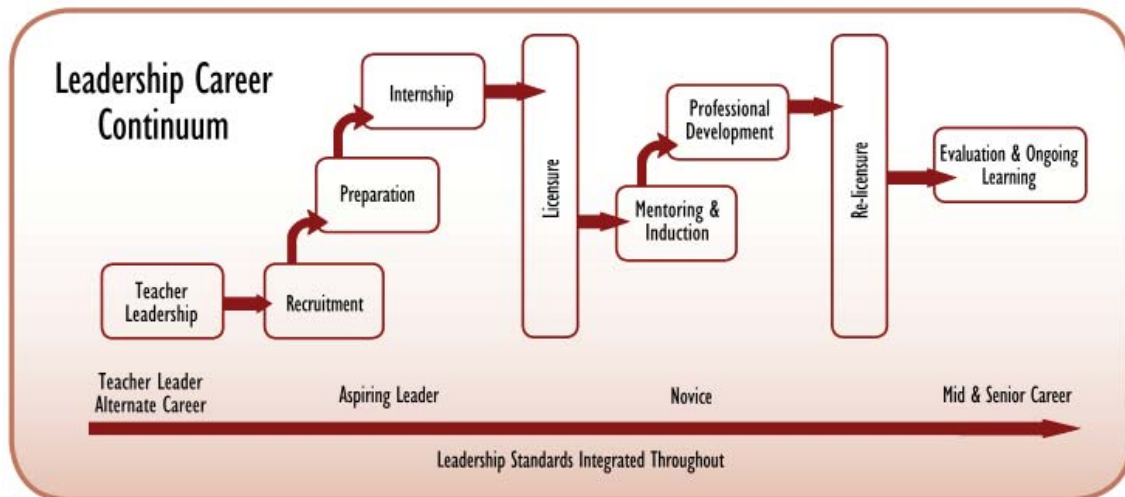
A guidebook for DPAS II is available via the Delaware Department of Education website at www.doe.k12.de.us/csa/dpasii/admin/DPASII_AdministratorGuidecomplete.pdf.

Putting the Key Elements Together: Developing a Cohesive Leadership System

Many challenges principals face in the leadership system stem from a lack of coordination and coherence in leadership training, support, and evaluation systems. From preparation programs not aligning with state standards to evaluation systems not capturing competencies vital to improving school culture and student outcomes, the support and evaluation systems for principals operating in relative isolation from one another fail to effectively meet the needs of school leaders. Recognizing the need for a cohesive leadership system within states, The Wallace Foundation has invested resources for more than a decade to support research and action in school leadership including many of the exemplar states mentioned above.

A cohesive leadership system ideally brings together the various policies, systems, and processes that impact a principal's career. Common structures and policies are some of the key factors in developing a cohesive leadership system.⁴⁷ The figure on page 11 provides an illustration of the various systems involved in supporting principals. To develop a cohesive leadership system, collaboration among the various leadership systems is necessary so principals experience a seamless transition through the system. The knowledge, skills, and support that a principal receives from each component of the career continuum should provide a foundation that the next system can use and build upon. One will notice that throughout the entire continuum, state leadership standards are an integral part of each of the systems. Whether it is principal preparation or leadership evaluation, all of the systems within the continuum draw from the state leadership standards.

While no state currently has a complete cohesive leadership system, research suggests that the Delaware,



Iowa and Kentucky exhibit all five characteristics of highly cohesive leadership systems, including: 1) a comprehensive scope of leadership initiatives; 2) alignment of policy and practice; 3) broad stakeholder engagement; 4) agreement on how to improve leadership; and 5) coordination through strong organizational leadership.⁴⁸

These qualities put them on the track to building a cohesive leadership system though researchers acknowledge that it takes sustained support over time with stable organizational leadership to spearhead the reforms. Therefore, it is important for state boards bring together these seemingly independent pieces of the school leadership system to provide the overarching structure for reform. Whether it is through policy or state-level collaboration with other parts of the education system, the state board has the opportunity to develop well-aligned leadership support and evaluation systems.

3. Moving from Research to Policy: The School Leadership Discussion Worksheets

The worksheets beginning on page 12 are intended to guide discussions around each of the major policy areas—standards, preparation, professional development, and evaluation—that many state boards have authority over in the leadership system. Included in each worksheet is a process for examining and inventorying current policies and a set of questions for boards to consider.

Prior to beginning these exercises, gathering the following information will help the state board use the worksheets more effectively:

- A brief inventory and general understanding of current policies related to leadership standards, principal preparation programs, professional development, and principal evaluation.
- Challenges the state faces in school leadership, including which components of the leadership system most directly influence these challenges.
- An assessment of the strengths and limitations of the current policies around school leaders.

School leadership is an extremely complex issue. However, the impact that effective school leaders can have on the school environment and student achievement is immense. State boards have the opportunity to significantly improve the education system by developing a well-researched and thoughtful cohesive leadership system. The worksheets will help state boards consider these tough and sometimes volatile issues in a structured and productive manner.

Finally, it should be noted that because states are at various points in developing ways to effectively train, license, support, and evaluate school leaders, the worksheets provided are not intended to give a comprehensive list of issues that your state board should be considering in school leadership. Rather, they are to help boards explore the role the state and specifically state policy has in addressing school leadership issues.

Worksheet 1: State Leadership Standards

As state boards review their own state leadership standards, boards should ensure that their standards are not only aligned with the competencies supported in the ISLLC standards, but also that the standards fit the context and setting of their state. State leadership standards are the foundation of a cohesive leadership system; therefore, it is important they reflect the needs within the state. There may be specific competencies beyond the ISLLC standards that are necessary for a school leader to succeed in the schools of particular states. The ISLLC standards are well-researched and linked to behaviors of successful leaders, but should only be the starting point for a discussion of what leaders are expected to do in each state to be successful.

	Who Has Authority Over This Part of the System?	Questions to Ask When Considering Policy Development
Standards Development and Passage		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● When was the last time that the state examined or revised leadership standards? ● What conditions, if any, have changed in the state that would lead the board to consider revisions to the leadership standards? ● What feedback, if any, has the state received from teachers, parents, students, principals and superintendents regarding how these standards reflect the needs of schools? ● Do the standards need to incorporate state-specific competencies for leaders to succeed in schools? ● Are current standards based in research and/or the 2008 ISLLC standards? ● Do the state standards, based on the ISSLC standards, need to be broadened to cover additional categories (e.g., standards for master principals who are then able to become mentors to newly licensed principals)? ● How do licensure requirements integrate state leadership standards?

Worksheet 2: Principal Preparation Programs

As discussed in the state example on page 7, Mississippi required all pre-service leadership programs to reapply for accreditation. Mississippi’s use of this policy tool lead to significant growth and change in principal training programs in the state. While not all states will feel the need to resort to such measures, there are issues in leadership preparation that state boards can address through changes to preparation policy.

	Who Has Authority Over This Part of the System?	Questions to Ask When Considering Policy Development
Preparation Program Approval and Oversight		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How do preparation programs demonstrate integration of state leadership standards into the curriculum taught and competencies developed? ● Do individuals have to complete field experience internships to graduate from preparation programs? ● What mechanisms exist to ensure that preparation programs are held accountable for effectively preparing school leaders to meet state leadership standards and succeeding in leadership positions? ● Does the state collect information (including principal evaluation data) on principal placements and link them back to preparation programs they came from?
Preparation Program Implementation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How do districts and preparation programs collaborate on design and delivery of principal training? If they do not, what state actions could increase collaboration? ● How do districts work with preparation programs to meet specific needs within a community such as a highly rural area or concentrated poverty? ● How do individuals demonstrate competency to gain a license? Are there performance-based elements?

Worksheet 3: Principal Professional Development

Professional development should be more than a principal receiving content knowledge on effective leadership a few hours a month. Quality professional development programs have the ability to improve a principal’s skills on how to effectively lead a school and help put those skills into practice. As a state board considers policy action, the following questions provide the various aspects of a professional development program that can help a principal continue to hone skills while progressing through his or her career.

	Who Has Authority Over This Part of the System?	Questions to Ask When Considering Policy Development
Principal Professional Development		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How do principals track growth and progress in professional development activities? ● What collaborations with mentors or peers do new principals have to discuss challenges they face in schools? ● What role can the state play in promoting these collaborations? ● How do professional development programs address these challenges and integrate state leadership standards? ● What outcomes, discussions, or products result from principal professional development experiences? ● What portfolio of work related to professional growth and state leadership standards do principals collect for the relicensure process? ● Does the state require or support a new principal mentorship program? If yes, how is it working and how can it be improved? ● Does the state support other programs (e.g., principal academies or school administration manager (SAM) programs) to improve school leader effectiveness? ● Is additional credentialing needed for leader specialists (SAMs, mentors, turnaround specialists)? ● Besides time in the field and professional development hours, how do the requirements change for relicensure? ● What certifications or endorsements exist for principals to demonstrate improvement and growth prior to the end of a license period?

Worksheet 4: Principal Evaluation

There are numerous systems of leadership evaluations in the country. Some states, such as Alabama, Delaware, North Carolina, and Tennessee, have a state-defined process for evaluation of principals. Other states, such as Florida, Georgia, and Maryland, leave decisions about principal evaluations up to local school districts. Whatever the system being used for principal evaluations in the state, there is a state role in the process, whether it is ensuring that state leadership standards are integrated into district evaluations, developing a statewide principal evaluation system, or developing a model for districts for principal evaluations that fits within state standards.

	Who Has Authority Over This Part of the System?	Questions to Ask When Considering Policy Development
<p style="text-align: center;">Principal Evaluation Development</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What should the state role be in evaluation (e.g., defining major elements to include in the assessment; disseminating information about what other districts are using for effective principal assessments)? ● How does the state ensure leadership standards get integrated into principal evaluations and individuals demonstrate competency in these standards? ● Do the evaluations provide both outcome-based performance measures for accountability and learning-based assessments of progress for individual growth of principals?
<p style="text-align: center;">Principal Evaluation Implementation</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Does/should the state require evaluations as a part of licensure or re-licensure? ● How do principal evaluations inform improvement efforts in principal preparation programs? ● How do the evaluations identify areas of strength and improvement for principals? ● What supports and professional development opportunities are linked to these evaluations for principals to work on areas of improvement? ● What supports are in place for principals who receive unsatisfactory evaluations?

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