



Building Principal Capacity and Engagement for Reforms

Improving the Use of Principal Time

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Purpose of This Document

This document outlines ways in which State policymakers can enable effective school leadership.

A decade of research has shown that, on average, a principal accounts for 25 percent of a school's total impact on student achievement.¹ A 2012 study found that principals have a stronger effect on all students in a school than teachers do, because teachers affect only their students.² In fact, the difference between an average and an above-average principal can impact student achievement by as much as 20 percentage points.³ Above-average principals have such a substantial influence on students because they amplify great teaching. Specifically, they develop teachers, manage talent and create a great place to work.

Given this impact of principals on teaching and learning, it is unsurprising that States implementing Race to the Top reforms report that principals are central to the effectiveness of those reforms. Implementing new standards and assessments for students and new educator evaluation and support systems requires principals to do their work differently, allocate their time in new ways and

often learn new skills. Successfully transitioning to more rigorous instruction requires principals to spend more time in classrooms than ever before and to spend more time providing feedback to teachers to support improvement.

With principals so fundamentally important to the success of students, there are actions that States can take to foster policies that enable, rather than hinder, strong school leaders. This document identifies ways States can improve policies and practices that enable principals' capacity, so that they can focus on implementing reforms to improve outcomes for students. The policies, tools and strategies outlined in this document can contribute to a State's plan to improve principals' effective use of time—focusing school leaders on needed reforms.

Time Scarcity: Challenges with Principal Focus on Key Reforms

Currently, some principals may not spend enough time on instructional activities. "Recent studies reveal that the average principal spends around 18 percent of his or her time in the area of instruction and curriculum, and around **3 percent of total time on teacher evaluation**, numbers largely unchanged after 30 years of concentrated efforts to increase them... This means that the average principal spends about 80 minutes a week on teacher evaluation, about **3 minutes per teacher per week**."⁴ School systems often compound

¹ Leithwood, K., Louis, K. S., Anderson, S., and Wahlstrom, K. (2004). *How Leadership Influences Student Learning*. New York, NY: Wallace Foundation; Marzano, R.J., Waters, T., and McNulty, B. (2005). *School leadership that works: From research to results*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

² Branch, G., Hanushek, E. A., and Rivkin, S. G. (2012). Estimating the effect of leaders on public sector productivity: The case of school principals (pp. 45). Washington, D.C.: National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education.

³ Based on a 2005 study by McREL that analyzed 70 different studies from over three decades of research.

⁴ Murphy, Joseph, Phillip Hallinger, and Ronald Heck. "Leading Via Teacher Evaluation: The Case of the Missing Clothes?" *Educational Researcher* 42.6 (2013): 349-54. Emphasis added.

The Reform Support Network, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, supports the Race to the Top grantees as they implement reforms in education policy and practice, learn from each other, and build their capacity to sustain these reforms, while sharing these promising practices and lessons learned with other States attempting to implement similarly bold education reform initiatives.

this problem by requiring principals to spend more time on a multitude of non-instructional or administrative tasks. As a result, principals are not able to focus on the leadership activities that matter.⁵

Engaging principals directly in the design and development of reform strategies (such as implementing new teacher evaluations, and college- and career-ready assessments) can strengthen these reforms. This engagement has the dual benefit of designing policy with key implementers in mind and building principals' commitment to the reforms.

The State's Role in Supporting Principal Capacity

It is not hyperbole to suggest that ambitious teacher-quality reforms and college- and career-ready assessments will succeed or fail, based largely on whether principals dedicate time and expertise to supporting instruction. Thus, States should support principals in shifting their focus and improving their instructional leadership practice. Research shows that principals who transition successfully to new standards, assessments and systems for evaluating and supporting teachers establish a consistent set of routines, tools and practices to plan for instruction, use data effectively, build their own instructional knowledge and focus their time on developing teachers to improve instruction.⁶

This tool is designed to align with the work States have undertaken with the RSN and is based on New Leaders' Research⁷ on the conditions necessary for

⁵ Ikemoto, Gina, Lori Taliaferro, and Jacquelyn Davis. Ending the Need for Superheroes: Creating District Conditions That Enable Principals to Be Effective. New Leaders' working paper.

⁶ The Achievement Network. "Focusing on the How: Guidance for School and District Leaders on Supporting Teachers Through the Transition to the Common Core". Published by The Aspen Institute Education and Society Program. September 2013.

⁷ Adams, E., Ikemoto, G., & Taliaferro, L. (2012). Playmakers: How Great Principals Build and Lead Great Teams of Teachers. New Leaders: New York, NY. Retrieved from <http://www.newleaders.org/newsreports/publications/playmakers/>.

Ikemoto, G., Taliaferro, L., Fenton, B., & Davis, J. (2014). Great Principals at Scale: Creating District Conditions that Enable All Principals to be Effective. New Leaders: New York, NY and George W. Bush Institute: Dallas, TX. Retrieved from <http://www.newleaders.org/newsreports/great-principals-at-scale/>.

effective leadership, State can use three "levers" to assess the impact of policies and practices on principal capacity:

- **Distributed leadership:** the degree to which principals can and do involve other leaders in critical school-level leadership tasks;
- **Principal role definition:** the degree to which human capital policies provide principals with the expectations and authority to effectively enact key reform strategies; and
- **Principal professional learning and management:** the degree to which principals have the skills and knowledge to effectively lead reform efforts and the degree to which those who supervise principals have the expectations, authority, skills and knowledge to support and develop principals.

Within each of these three levers, there are many different actions that States can take. This document identifies some of the highest impact actions for improving use of principal time to focus on reforms. We recognize that State influence can take many forms—some direct, some indirect. When considering the suggestions for each lever, policymakers may reflect on the political climate in the State to determine which type of influence will be most effective.

While district action is not the focus of this document, it is important to keep in mind several local conditions that can improve the effective use of principal time. They include: Having a high-quality strategic plan that allows principals to set goals, define strategies, and prioritize and align resources; access to high-quality tools and systems, including curriculum, assessments, and student data systems; clear expectations for the role that enables principals to focus their time on the most important aspects of the job; and strong managers who support principals in improving instruction and managing talent in the schools they lead.

Key State Policy Conditions for Success

This document identifies distributed leadership, principal capacity and principal management and professional learning as key levers for States to help principals use time effectively in order to focus on reform. For each of these levers, the document presents policy conditions for improvement and associated suggestions for action. At a high-level, we suggest:

- **For distributed leadership:** Encourage the development of leadership teams, which include effective teachers (as identified by evaluation results and adult leadership potential) to support the instructional leadership and talent management work of principals; create options and training opportunities for teacher leaders and administrators to serve as certified observers and/or evaluators in the teacher evaluation process; and support integrated approaches and flexible staffing models that allow principals to distribute operations or other responsibilities across a leadership team.
- **For principal role definition:** Create or update leadership standards to emphasize the activities principals should prioritize (for example, instructional leadership and talent management); redefine the role of the principal, including corresponding human capital policies, and align the new policies with leadership standards that emphasize the activities principals should prioritize; and clearly communicate which leadership practices offer the greatest potential for improving teacher effectiveness and student achievement.
- **For principal professional learning and management:** Design and develop a strategy for providing professional development opportunities and other supports to principals; redefine the expectations for principal managers in providing support for and building the capacity of principals; and ensure that compliance responsibilities and expectations of principals are streamlined and clearly related to their most important areas of focus.

Action Items: Making the Policy Conditions Come Alive

Below are suggestions on how to achieve effective policy conditions aligned with each of the three levers. This tool also includes State and district exemplars and other resources and tools, where available, following each section.

Distributed Leadership

Expand the instructional leadership capacity of principals by sharing responsibilities among a strong instructional leadership team. Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE) Associate Professor John Diamond offers a concept of distributed leadership: “[distributed leadership] moves beyond thinking about the leadership actions of a single leader to thinking about the interactions of leaders, teachers and the contextual situation of a school in influencing instructional practice.”⁸

Conditions:

1. Encourage the development of leadership teams, which include effective teachers (as identified by evaluation results and adult leadership potential) to support the instructional leadership and talent management work of principals.

Suggestion A | Model training and guidance for principals on how to identify the right members for a leadership team, form the team and help it function well. Engage the team in leading for instruction, for instance looking at student work to make key instructional and resource decisions.

Suggestion B | Provide technical assistance to districts on designing the teacher-leader role to support principals in instructional leadership.

⁸Diamond, John, Associate Professor, Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE). “A new view: distributed leadership”. Summary written by Susan Henry, doctoral student in Learning and Teaching at HGSE.

Suggestion C | Create model teacher-leader roles as guidance for local educational agencies (LEAs) or principals that extend the reach of effective educators, as well as providing them opportunities to practice adult leadership skills.

(1) Provide opportunities for teachers to grow within their profession:

- Taking responsibility for additional students or students with greater needs for improvement
- Taking responsibility for additional students or students with greater needs for improvement
- Opening their classroom to other teachers to observe model practice

(2) Provide opportunities for teachers to move towards school leadership positions:

- Spearheading data-driven conversations with peers
- Supporting the principal by conducting observations for teacher evaluations⁹
- Coaching peers on instruction, using strategic communication to achieve goals and hold difficult conversations
- Serving on a school-wide leadership team
- Leading a team of teachers, including leading effective team meetings, identifying strategies to support student efficacy, and maintaining the team's vision for college- and career-readiness

⁹The Gates' Foundation's recent Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) results show that the use of multiple observers significantly improves the reliability of evaluation results. The difference between one administrator observing one lesson (.51) to one administrator observing two lessons (.58) was almost doubled when two administrators observed one lesson each (.67). Additionally, pairing one full-length administrator observation with three, short peer observations achieves the reliability of two administrators. While these shorter, 15-minute observations were not as reliable by themselves as a full hour of observation, supplementing the full-length observation with a series of shorter observations by trained peers allowed more people to observe the teacher and, in turn, increased reliability of the feedback to teachers.

Suggestion D | Encourage LEAs to partner in creating educator career ladders that include shared learning opportunities, and to identify common areas of need and trends in teacher leadership that affect all collaborating LEAs.

2. Create options and training opportunities for teacher leaders and administrators to serve as certified observers and/or evaluators in the teacher evaluation process.

Suggestion A | Remove statutes or regulations that prevent non-administrators from conducting the observations as part of the teacher evaluation process.

Suggestion B | Provide certification and training on best practices for observing instruction, including alignment with a rigorous curriculum.

3. Support integrated approaches and flexible staffing models that allow principals to distribute operations or other responsibilities across a leadership team.

Suggestion A | Establish communities of practice to share training, tools and resources that support the integration of reforms by principals and their leadership teams.

Suggestion B | Encourage LEAs to convene principals and their broader leadership teams to plan, organize and develop supports for their schools in improving instruction aligned with the new standards and assessments.

Suggestion C | Encourage LEAs to use a differentiated compensation model to develop teacher leaders and reward effective teachers who remain in the classroom. These model systems should provide additional compensation for teachers who reach a specific level of performance, but provide a larger salary increase for teacher leaders who are expanding their reach with students or other teachers. This structure will recognize great teaching, as well as provide an incentive to become a teacher leader with additional opportunities and responsibilities.

EXAMPLES AND TOOLS TO USE

Using Observers and Evaluators Other Than Principals

Tennessee, Colorado and **Rhode Island** all provide flexibility on who can conduct teacher evaluations if prospective evaluators take a State-approved evaluation training program. In **Tennessee**, principals, assistant principals and instructional leaders are trained on the observation protocol and certified annually by passing a test. In **Rhode Island**, principals and assistant principals are the primary evaluators. The system also allows for “complementary evaluators” (such as department heads, curriculum coordinators or peer teachers) to be a part of the evaluation team at the district’s discretion and if they receive training. **Colorado** requires that any person who conducts an evaluation of school licensed personnel must hold an administrators license or complete a State-approved evaluation training program.



Developing Teacher Leaders

Louisiana convened nearly 2,000 teachers representing every school across the State to two events in April and June 2013. The events served as an opportunity for teacher leaders, principals and district staff to share suggestions, plan and organize for the transition to Common Core. The State uses a District Support Toolbox and Teacher Support Toolbox to keep the field apprised of implementation progress, disseminate resources and supports, and share strategies for improving instructional practices. Teacher Leader resources and supports for Common Core can be found here: <http://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/library/louisiana-teacher-leaders>.

Public Impact has a set of resources designed to assist and support teachers, teacher leaders and principals. Found online here: <http://publicimpact.com/teachers-leaders/>.

The **Center for Educational Leadership at the University of Washington** has a rich set of resources dedicated to strengthening principal capacity for instructional leadership. As part of a principal support framework, they lift up promising district examples and tools that focus on the critically important role of teacher leaders as partners with principals in carrying out instructional leadership tasks. Found online here: <http://www.k-12leadership.org/Action-Area-3>.

Implementation Support Resources

EngageNY serves as an online portal through which the **New York** State Education Department (NYSED) provides districts and schools access to curriculum and instructional resources, assessments and other related materials to help with the transition to the New York State P-12 Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). These resources can be used to build expertise across school leadership teams and prevent the work of implementation from solely resting with the principal. Found online at www.engageny.org.

The **Aspen Institute** provides several resources on implementing Common Core State Standards at the school level. Consider sharing these resources with districts to enhance the strength of leadership teams as they roll out new assessments. Found online here: <http://www.aspeninstitute.org/events/2013/09/19/what-how-leading-common-core-success-school-level>. Also consider sharing an article by Rachel Curtis which outlines ways to define teacher leader roles and responsibilities: *Finding a New Way: Leveraging Teacher Leadership to Meet Unprecedented Demands*.

School-Level Administrative Support Roles

In **Colorado**, support for school operations managers is encouraged through the Innovation School Model Act, which creates a process by which a school may obtain waivers from district policies, State policies and collective bargaining agreement provisions. Potential areas for time management innovation include school staffing, faculty recruitment, preparation, professional development, evaluation compensation and school governance. A description of the Innovation School Model Act can be found here: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/choice/innovationschools>.

Principal Role Definition

Principals need support to become better instructional leaders if they are to support teachers in the transition to more rigorous standards and assessments. A recent study by the Center for Education Policy Analysis at Stanford found that principals with better time management skills spend more time on instruction (such as coaching, conducting classroom walk-throughs and planning teacher professional development) in their schools.¹⁰

Conditions:

1. Create or update leadership standards to emphasize the activities that principals should prioritize (such as instructional leadership and talent management).

Suggestion A | To help districts and leaders focus on the heightened expectations of principals, reflect on the most important standards and identify priority skills as points of emphasis. Align emphasis areas with current reforms underway, such as rolling out rigorous standards and assessments, implementing new teacher evaluation systems and increasing the focus on instructional leadership.

Suggestion B | Develop a training plan that cultivates a common understanding of the leadership standards and expectations for time management as part of the new principal role among principals and their managers. Convene principals, principal managers and heads of preparation programs to develop a common understanding of the role of the principal and a shared awareness of the leadership standards, including a focus on time management.

2. Redefine the role of the principal, including corresponding human capital policies, and align the new policies with leadership standards that emphasize the activities principals should prioritize.

Suggestion A | Provide model job descriptions and selection criteria for principals that are aligned with the leadership standards.

¹⁰ Grissom, J. A., Loeb, S., and Mitani, H. (2013). Principal time management skills: Explaining patterns in principals' time use and effectiveness.

Suggestion B | Design and develop a model principal evaluation and support system that emphasizes leadership actions for improving teacher practice and student achievement. Use aggregate data from the principal evaluation and support system to monitor its implementation as well as to inform broader State leadership policies. Ensure the State-level data system can collect evaluation data and match it using unique identifiers that protect privacy. Monitor LEA system implementation by reviewing the distribution curve of summative results and running correlations with student outcomes. Identify struggling LEAs and those that are excelling; gather both groups to provide support and share best practices.

Suggestion C | Develop content and accompanying tools for a hiring resource guide aligned with your vision of leadership and easy for LEAs to use. While the hiring and selection process is an important lever for ensuring great principals in all schools, many LEAs do not capitalize on this opportunity. Districts lack sufficient information on candidates' strengths and weaknesses, a common understanding of the characteristics of strong candidates and differentiation of selection criteria based on school needs.

3. Clearly communicate which leadership practices offer the greatest potential for improving teacher effectiveness and student achievement.

Suggestion A | Emphasize focus on instructional leadership and talent management (including a heavy reliance on time management) in the role of the principal. Embed this message in the communication plan for principal evaluations so both principals and principal managers see it.

Suggestion B | Model professional development (such as instructional videos) for improving principals' instructional knowledge, time management skills and practices.

Suggestion C | Convene networks or communities of practice across districts, so principals can learn from one another as they carry out reforms.

EXAMPLES AND TOOLS TO USE

Leadership Standards

The **Tennessee** Department of Education (TDOE) recently undertook work to comprehensively overhaul its leadership standards. The new Tennessee Instructional Leadership Standards (TILS) are a strong example of how a State focused the standards to emphasize State priorities and communicated their rollout. According to TDOE, the new TILS will be used to align selection, preparation, licensure, evaluation and professional development. The TILS were designed to set high standards for effective leadership based upon research and best practice, supporting leaders to reach those standards, and empowering districts to build a network of exceptional instructional leaders who get results. TILS are ISLLC aligned. The revised standards can be found online: http://www.state.tn.us/sbe/2013_documents/February2013_Board_Meeting/III_F_Revision_of_the_Tennessee_Inst_ructional_Leadership_Standards_Attachment.pdf.



Colorado has six leadership standards:

- Strategic leadership
- Instructional leadership
- School culture and equity leadership
- Human resources leadership
- Managerial leadership
- External development leadership

As part of the State model for principal evaluation, the Colorado Department of Education offers three options for weighting the standards: equally, unequally and district chosen.

New Leaders Principal Evaluation Tools include both a Principal Evaluation Handbook (which includes required goal-setting and strategic planning forms, optional observation and feedback forms, and required summative rating form) and a training plan for principal evaluators called Putting Principal Evaluation into Practice. This training plan makes recommendations on sequence, timing, audience and individual practice activities that might be relevant for developing a common understanding of leadership standards. Find it online at: http://www.newleaders.org/wp-content/uploads/NL_Trainingmodules_vFNL.pdf.

Aligned Professional Development

Louisiana's online instructional video library is used by districts and schools across the State to build observation and feedback skills. Find it online here: <http://videolibrary.louisianabelieves.com/>.

The **Center on Great Teachers and Leaders** (GTL Center), part of the U.S. Department of Education's Comprehensive Center program, will expand on the work of the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality and provide technical assistance for a variety of topics, including building support systems as part of a coherent human capital management plan. The center's technical assistance toolbox, which provides tools along a principal's career continuum, can be found online: <http://www.tqsource.org/toolbox.php>.

Principal Professional Learning and Management

To connect evaluation results with professional development, ensure principal managers are ready for their new role and upgrade the State's professional learning opportunities.

Conditions:

1. Design and develop a strategy for providing professional development opportunities and other supports to principals.

Suggestion A | Expect robust professional development plans from LEAs and build LEA capacity to provide job-embedded professional development for principals.

Suggestion B | Encourage LEAs to use the cohort model to group principals with similar career paths and challenges. For example, if a subset of schools is dealing with a common challenge, the school principals could meet to solve the problem together. However, that type of grouping does not substitute for professional development targeted at principals at certain points in their careers, such as induction for novice principals. For larger LEAs, States can develop guidance on how they could use a cohort model effectively within their district. For smaller LEAs, States can support cross-district networks to create support groups.

2. Redefine the expectations for principal managers in providing support for and building the capacity of principals.

Suggestion A | Ensure that job descriptions and expectations for principal managers are aligned with supporting the instructional goals of principals. Set the expectation that they manage principals with a sense of urgency and accountability for student outcomes.

Suggestion B | Create model training modules and videos for the broader rollout of the principal evaluation and support system. These modules should describe the most important practices in the school leadership standards and cover the content of the evaluation system, including how to use the evaluation system rubric to describe a common understanding of principal practice, set goals and corresponding strategic plans, collect and use evidence, observe principals, determine a summative score, and provide actionable feedback. Use case studies and sample principal practice for review. After the first round of observations and the mid-year review, bring principal managers back together in regional groups to ensure they are defining principal practice in a consistent manner.

3. Ensure that compliance responsibilities and expectations of principals are streamlined and clearly related to their most important responsibilities.

Suggestion A | Organize State department of education staff to coordinate service to – and requirements of – principals. Consider grouping common requests of principals and identifying a point person for principal effectiveness activities in the State.

Suggestion B | Create a timeline that integrates activities related to the rollout of new standards and assessments, educator evaluation, and effectiveness policies. Do a side-by-side comparison of current timelines and identify opportunities to combine activities. Remove duplicative reporting, deadlines or other unnecessary compliance responsibilities. Once created, share the integrated timeline throughout the State using webinars, regional meetings and site visits.

EXAMPLES AND TOOLS TO USE

Principal Professional Learning (Effective Time Management)

Consider developing a toolkit or guide of effective time management tools and strategies or investing in time management coaching and training for principals. Examples that could be included are: *Seven Time Management Sanity Savers*, *Finding Time*, *Principals Offer Practical, Timely “Time Management” Tips*, as well as *The Big Rocks: Priority Management for Principals* by Kim Marshall.



Stanford University offers a useful body of research on principal time use and effectiveness <http://cepa.stanford.edu/content/principal-time-management-skills-explaining-patterns-principals-time-use-and-effectiveness>.

Principal Manager Supports

As mentioned in the previous toolbox, **New Leaders** Principal Evaluation Tools include both a Principal Evaluation Handbook (with required goal-setting and strategic planning forms, optional observation and feedback forms, and required summative rating form) and a training plan for principal evaluators called Putting Principal Evaluation into Practice. This training plan is useful in developing principal manager skills in providing useful feedback to principals.

We highlighted the **Center for Educational Leadership at the University of Washington** in the Distributed Leadership toolbox. They also provide strong resources for managing principals. Their Principal Support Framework and high level assessment tool helps districts support school leaders, especially in areas such as clarity of shared vision of the principal role and providing effective principal management. Found online here: <http://depts.washington.edu/uwcel/PSFTK/PSF%20planning%20template.10.2.12.pdf>.

For resources specific to principal management, see Action Area 2 here: <http://www.k-12leadership.org/Action-Area-2>.

The **Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation** also provide a helpful resource on managing principals. *Leading for Effective Teaching: How School Systems Can Support Principal Success* describes how the principalship is changing in school districts and CMOs that have adopted sophisticated new teacher development and evaluation systems and highlights emerging strategies for better supporting principals as instructional leaders and human capital managers. Found online here: <http://depts.washington.edu/uwcel/PSFTK/Jerald-White-Paper-Leading-for-Effective-Teaching.pdf>.

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