

Building Principal Capacity and Engagement for Reforms

Principal Engagement

January 2015

Purpose of This Document

Because principals are fundamentally important to the success of students, we believe that there are actions States can take to foster policies that enable—not hinder—strong school leaders. This document identifies ways you, as State leaders, can strengthen principal engagement in current reform efforts and cultivate active participation by principals in implementing new college- and career-ready standards and new educator evaluation and support systems,

including strategies to design feedback loops, collect data on reform implementation and engage principals in the design (and redesign) of reform efforts.

As a process note, resources identified in Learning Module 1 (found in *Building Principal Capacity and Engagement for Reforms: Improving the Use of Principal Time*) and Learning Module 2 (found in *Building Principal Capacity and Engagement for Reforms: Principal Professional Learning*) are also useful for principal engagement.

RESOURCES FOR ONGOING SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT

Online Resources

REDlab, a partnership between the Stanford School of Education and the Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford (d.school), conducts research on the application of “design thinking” to educational settings, including changing how we approach teaching and learning in K-12 schools. As defined by REDlab, “design thinking” is an approach to identifying and solving problems through a series of iterative prototyping. Information on current publications and projects can be found [online](#).

Stanford’s d.school also runs the **K12 Laboratory**, an initiative to engage students, teachers and school leaders in design thinking. Stories on how they’re rethinking the future of schools, re-envisioning teachers as innovators and the latest research can be found [online](#).

Created by **Riverdale Country School** and IDEO’s **Design for Learning Practice**, *Design Thinking for Educators* is a toolkit that adapts “design thinking” methods for the context of K-12 education. The accompanying workbook provides processes and methods for collaborative design of solutions to educational challenges. © 2012 IDEO LLC. All rights reserved. <http://designthinkingforeducators.com/>.

State or District Examples

Howard County Public School System and **Prince George’s County Public Schools**, in partnership with the **Maryland State Department of Education** and IDEO, applied “design thinking” to a specific question: “How might we redesign our approach to curriculum development and delivery to center around the needs and desires of our teachers and students?” The design team gathered data and information from administrators, teachers, parents and students to understand their desires and challenges. *21st Century Learning: A Design Thinking Approach for College and Career Readiness* describes the entire process, including how the feedback interviews informed the reconceptualization of curriculum and the development of new supplemental resources in those two counties. In addition, videos of the [process](#) and [findings](#) can be found online.



RESOURCES FOR DATA COLLECTION

Online Resources

The **d.school at Stanford University** has created a **series of resources** for collecting evidence from “product” users. One such data-collection tool is interviewing people who use products, tools or strategies—in our case, principals who implement college- and career-ready standards or teacher evaluation and support systems. This **protocol for preparing for an interview** makes the case for why preparation is important and provides tips for how to get ready, and this **method for conducting an interview** describes how to solicit authentic and actionable feedback.



Achieve has worked with a number of partner organizations to develop **tools and resources** to support the effectiveness of the Common Core State Standards, including a **Common Core Survey Tool** to help State leaders track how well the new standards are being implemented.

A number of surveys look at the school leadership practices that we would expect to be strong in schools where reforms are successfully being implemented; though they do not specifically ask about implementation, these instruments can provide insight into whether and how key reforms are playing out in schools. For example, the **Comprehensive Assessment of Leadership for Learning (CALL)** survey is administered to administrators, teachers and instructional support staff in a school, and measures a school’s effectiveness across five leadership domains. Upon completion of the survey, the CALL system provides actionable data for school improvement planning. A **sample survey and sample feedback report** is available on the **CALL Website**. Other survey instruments measure school practice and school climate more broadly, such as the **5 Essentials School Effectiveness Survey**, which addresses supports required for increased learning within four dimensions (one of which is leadership); more information can be found on the **UChicago Website**.

State or District Examples

In **Tennessee**, Governor Haslam asked the **State Collaborative on Reforming Education** to conduct an independent review of the State’s implementation of teacher evaluations. The collaborative held nine roundtables in urban, suburban and rural settings; conducted an online survey of all teachers and principals in the State; conducted in-depth interviews with educators overseeing the four approved teacher evaluation models; formed an Educator Work Team that included 22 teachers, principals and district leaders; and received feedback from educators through other networks and organizations as well as from the general public. A **summary** of this work as well as a **full report** are available on the collaborative’s **Website**.

Launched more than a decade ago in **North Carolina**, the Teacher Working Conditions Initiative was led by the Office of the Governor and the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission in partnership with the New Teacher Center. Through this collaborative, all educators in the State were surveyed on working conditions in their schools. A **summary of how the State used survey results to inform policy decisions** illustrates the strong impact educator voices have had on the North Carolina education landscape.

Since then, 18 States and a number of districts and other organizations and initiatives have partnered with **the New Teacher Center to survey more than 840,000 educators using the Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning Survey**. The survey asks principals, assistant principals, teachers and other school-based educators to weigh in on school-level working conditions across **nine categories**. This **summary** of the New Teacher Center’s Teaching Conditions Initiative provides an overview of the work that occurred between 2008 and 2012; this **full report** goes into more detail on survey findings from 2012–2013, which include data from **Colorado, Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee** and **Vermont**.

RESOURCES FOR WORKING GROUPS AND ADVISORY COMMITTEES



Online Resources

The **Reform Support Network** has previously shared the Educator Engagement framework (I Know, I Apply, I Participate, I Lead) for including teachers in policy development and implementation. As outlined in the **Engaging Educators: A Reform Support Network Guide for States and Districts** and **summary**, the framework can and should be used by school systems to develop tailored and tiered outreach strategies to engage school leaders and other stakeholders in education reform. Putting educators at the center of engagement strategies—making them the subjects rather than the objects of sentences—empowers educators and helps States re-envision their role in cultivating active participation by principals on implementing new college- and career-ready standards and new educator evaluation and support systems

As described above, the **d.school at Stanford University** has created a **series of resources** to aid in the design or redesign of products and systems. Methods such as an **empathy map** (used to gain a deep understanding of user needs), **why-how laddering** (used to distill feedback into actionable and meaningful input for the next iteration) or **point-of-view madlib** (used to reframe a design challenge into an actionable problem statement and launch the generation of new ideas) can be used to scaffold sessions with stakeholders.

A number of organizations actively convene educators and build their capacity to leverage their expertise and experience in schools to provide actionable feedback to policymakers. Often these organizations select leaders based on their commitment to new reform strategies, their demonstrated leadership in successfully implementing new reforms and their impact on student outcomes. In developing their educator engagement strategies, States may opt to partner with an outside organization to help build trust among various stakeholders and to leverage the expertise of groups for whom organizing educators is a key function. For example, **America Achieves** offers a number of **educator fellowships and programs** that bring together outstanding leaders at the classroom, school, district and State levels to build their knowledge around key education policies and practices and support them in effectively engaging with policy development at the local, State and Federal levels. In addition, **Leadership for Education Equity** offers a number of **fellowships for Teach For America corps members and alumni** to build their leadership skills and experience.

The **National Association of Elementary School Principals** and the **National Association of Secondary School Principals** both have State-level affiliates that can help States identify and organize principals to engage in policy conversations around new college- and career-ready standards and new educator evaluation and support systems. Lists and contact information for **NAESP state affiliates** and **NASSP state affiliates** can be found on the organization's respective websites. Also available online are **elementary school distinguished principals** and **secondary school principals of the year** for each state.

Finally, the RSN can provide a list of principals across RSN States who are ready to engage in State policy conversations around the implementation of reform efforts.

State or District Examples

Kentucky has partnered with the **Hope Street Group** to develop a State Teacher Fellowship through which they identify collaborative solutions to the State's most pressing education challenges. With the Hope Street Group serving as a neutral external partner, teachers are supported in translating their instructional expertise and experience into policy solutions that they share with local and State leaders to inspire real change in their own communities and State. A **press release** includes additional detail on the scope of the partnership. Additional information on the group's State partnerships can be found on the **HSG Website**.

Hillsborough County Public Schools launched a new teacher evaluation system in school year 2010–2011. The Aspen Institute's ***Building It Together: The Design and Implementation of Hillsborough County Public Schools' Teacher Evaluation System*** is a case study that documents the most successful practices of the rollout, including the critical nature of collaboration and communication.

This information is being provided as a resource for Race to the Top grantees and others engaged in education reform. Information and materials mentioned or shown in this resource are provided as resources and examples for the viewer's convenience. No official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education of any product, commodity, service or enterprise mentioned in this resource is intended or should be inferred.

In addition, the instructional practices discussed or shown in this resource are not intended to mandate, direct or control a State's, local educational agency's or school's specific instructional content, academic achievement system and assessments, curriculum or program of instruction.

This publication features information from public and private organizations and links to additional information created by those organizations. Inclusion of this information does not constitute an endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education of any products or services offered or views expressed, nor does the Department of Education control its accuracy, relevance, timeliness or completeness.