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Evaluating School Principals A Legislative Approach



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A Legislative Approach

By Sara Shelton



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William T. Pound
Executive Director

7700 East First Place
Denver, Colorado 80203
(303) 364-7700

444 North Capitol Street, N.W., Suite 515
Washington, D.C. 20001
(202) 624-5400

www.ncsl.org

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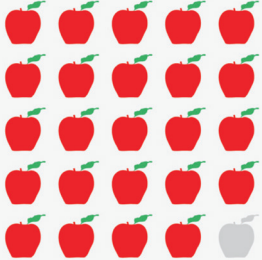
Approaching Principal Evaluation

The first section of this report offers guidance for approaching the issues of evaluating school principals. It provides background information, discusses the state legislative role, provides information about what legislators need to know and discusses current research. The second section features seven policy areas states are using to strengthen principal evaluations: 1) using statewide leadership (school principal) standards to guide evaluations; 2) measuring performance with student achievement data and using multiple performance measures; 3) using multiple levels of performance and frequency and timing of evaluations; 4) training and support for evaluators; 5) using evaluation data for continuous improvement of school principals' practice; 6) piloting and implementing evaluations systems; and 7) using evaluation data to inform human capital and workforce decisions. The last section features specific actions state legislators can take to improve principal evaluation systems, concluding remarks, notes and web resources.

Background

GREAT LEADERS ATTRACT AND RETAIN GREAT TEACHERS

A high-quality principal will hire, develop and support talented teachers...



Source: New Leaders, Leadership Matters, 2011. (© 2012 New Leaders Inc. All rights reserved.)

Leadership Matters

School principals play a critical role in school improvement and students' academic success. While teachers have a direct impact on students in their classroom, a principal affects all students in a given school. Principals greatly influence teacher quality by recruiting, developing and retaining excellent teachers—while also removing less effective ones—and by ensuring all students have a great teacher year after year.¹ Effective teachers and principals are the two most

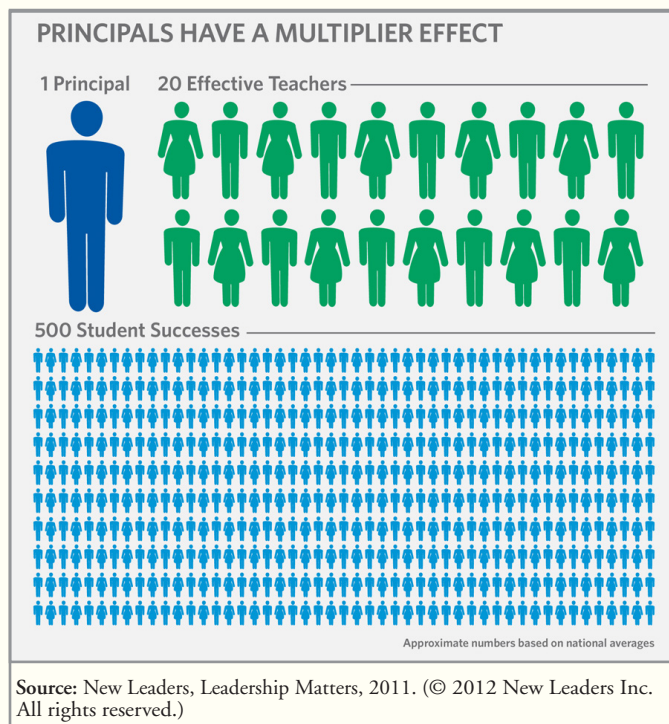
important school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school.

Principal-Student Achievement Link

Research demonstrates that nearly 60 percent of a school's influence on student achievement is attributable to teacher and principal effectiveness, with principals alone accounting for about a quarter of the total school effects.² The effects of good principals are most significant in schools with the greatest need. Moreover, virtually no documented instances occur where troubled schools are turned around without a talented principal.³

A Good Investment

The combination of effective teaching and capable principals—not one or the other—will improve student academic performance. Targeted investments in good principals can be a particularly cost-effective way to improve teaching and learning because principals are uniquely positioned in their schools to ensure that excellent teaching and learning spread beyond single classrooms.⁴



What Do Effective Principals Do?

- Shape a vision of academic success for all students based on high standards.
- Create a climate hospitable to education in order that safety and a cooperative spirit prevail.
- Cultivate leadership in others so that teachers and other staff assume their part in realizing the school vision.
- Improve instruction to enable teachers to teach at their best and students to learn at their utmost.
- Manage people, data and processes to foster school improvement.⁵

Source: The Wallace Foundation, *The School Principal as Leader: Guiding Schools to Better Teaching and Learning*, 2012.

Evaluation: A State Policy Lever for Principal and School Improvement

Principal evaluation holds great promise for improving principals' practice, building their capacity, holding them accountable for teacher effectiveness and student progress, and ensuring they have an overall positive impact on students and schools. Given the nexus between effective school principals and student achievement, evaluating and developing school principals is increasingly recognized as a key strategy for improving schools, increasing student achievement and narrowing persistent achievement gaps.⁶

According to the 2013 MetLife survey of teachers and principals, most principals report that their leadership responsibilities have changed vastly over the last five years and that the job has become too complex.⁷ Their days of serving merely as building managers are long gone. Today's principals not only are expected to manage school buildings and bus schedules, but they also must be instructional leaders focused on increasing student achievement and developing and supporting teachers. As expectations for principals evolve, so, too, should the evaluation systems that assess their performance. Evaluations should measure the effect principals have on increasing student achievement and teacher and organizational effectiveness. They also should assess how well principals demonstrate key leadership behaviors and actions, rather than knowledge or traits.⁸

Evaluation systems by and large have been a local endeavor used as a contract-driven review process to document tenure or renew contracts.⁹ A swell of recent efforts at the district, state and federal levels, however, are challenging the status quo. The Obama administration's hallmark education grant

competition, the \$4.35 billion Race to The Top program, flexibility offered by waivers from the federal No Child Left Behind Act, and the federal School Improvement Grants (SIG) have spurred immediate action by states to adopt evaluation systems for both teachers and principals based, in part, on student achievement.¹⁰

Rigorous, well-designed principal evaluations have the potential to leverage school improvement. Quality evaluation systems can serve multiple purposes. Evaluation systems can formalize expectations for principals statewide. They can guide continuous improvement of principal practice and inform personnel management decisions, including tenure, placement, promotion, compensation and dismissal. States can use evaluation data to guide preparation program design and delivery, inform and renew licensure, improve working conditions, and link principal evaluation to other state policies for school improvement. States also can use valid, reliable and timely evaluation data to make strategic investments to strengthen the principalship. Consequently, principal evaluation should not be viewed as single-purpose but, rather, as a continuous process for gathering data to improve the quality of principals, teaching and learning.¹¹

State Legislative Role

State legislators can lead efforts to develop and implement a robust framework for evaluating school principals that drives continuous improvement in principal performance and holds leaders accountable for improving teaching and learning. Lawmakers have available a number of options to strengthen principal evaluation, depending on their state's needs and context. State legislatures can:

- Ensure that principal evaluation is guided by robust statewide leadership standards (school principal);
- Engage a diverse set of stakeholders to develop a framework for principal evaluation;
- Encourage or require principal evaluation and establish criteria;
- Develop and support robust longitudinal data systems to facilitate the use of effective evaluation systems;
- Encourage or require districts to demonstrate how they are using evaluation system data for school improvement;
- Encourage or require data collection and monitoring about principals to drive professional development, inform continuous improvement of quality instruction, inform personnel decisions, and guide preparation program design and delivery; and
- Allocate funding to support rigorous, well-designed principal evaluation systems and ongoing professional development.

Recognizing that effective school principals are a virtual necessity for turning around low-performing schools,¹² state legislators are moving forward with promising policies to strengthen the principalship by improving leadership standards; providing incentives to recruit, select and retain a talented pool of aspiring principals; strengthening preparation program design and accreditation; strengthening licensure and certification requirements; developing and supporting evaluation systems; providing meaningful mentoring and ongoing professional development; and allocating funding to the most effective programs. The laws highlighted in this brief illustrate the important role legislators play in strengthening principal evaluation.

What Legislators Need to Know

State policymakers will want to understand challenges specific to their state in order to identify the best policies and/or remove barriers to evaluate and support effective school principals. Legislators may want to seek answers to the following questions from their state departments of education.

- **Statewide Leadership (School Principal) Standards.** Does your state have rigorous, well-defined standards for what school principals should know and be able to do? To what degree are the standards aligned with national professional standards of principal practice? Do your state standards for principals provide guidance throughout a leader's career continuum, including recruitment and selection, preparation, licensure, mentoring and induction, evaluation and ongoing professional development? Is there an emphasis for principals to implement the new college- and career-ready standards and support and evaluate teacher performance?
 - **Uses of Evaluation.** What purpose does your current principal evaluation system serve? What purposes should it serve? Is your state's longitudinal data system capable of capturing and representing principal performance data to ensure evaluation uses are being achieved at a state level? Are principal evaluations in your state used to:¹³
 - Strengthen principal performance by providing continuous feedback to principals and tracking individual progress toward mastering knowledge and skills needed to improve teaching and learning?
 - Identify professional development and supports tailored to individual principals and schools?
 - Provide feedback to licensing institutions on the performance of their graduates to promote continuous improvement of preparation programs?
 - Inform licensure and licensure renewal?
 - Advance career development and meet requirements for professional-level licensure?
 - Improve working conditions, including autonomy over resources (people, time and money) and access to timely and useful data?
 - Inform personnel management decisions, including tenure, placement, promotion, compensation and dismissal?
 - Link principal evaluation to other state policies for school improvement?
- **Who Is Evaluated.** Who is evaluated—principals only, assistant principals or other school and district leaders? Should evaluations differ based on level of expertise, number of years in a particular school, responsibilities, school performance (e.g., turnaround designation), grade configuration (elementary, middle and high school), student poverty and school accountability status?
 - **Measures of Evaluation.** Does the evaluation include multiple measures, including principal observation; classroom and site visits; surveys of students, parents and staff; peer-to-peer reviews; portfolios; local indicators such as student and teacher attendance and graduation/dropout rates; student academic growth; and/or staff planning and development? Is each measure assigned a weight that is combined into a total score, reflecting goals and priorities? How well are the measures constructed and aligned with your state's leadership standards? How do measures coincide with state and district student assessment calendars? Is there a self-assessment component? Is the instrument standards-based? Is the instrument valid and reliable? Does the instrument consider school context?
 - **Frequency of Evaluations.** Does your state provide annual and periodic evaluations of school principals that are guided by statewide leadership standards (school principal)? Are formative and summative evaluations required annually for all principals or for principals new to the profession, school or district?
 - **Evaluators.** Who evaluates principals' performance? Who selects, trains, supports and monitors evaluators to ensure principal evaluation is fair, valid and reliable, and that feedback is actionable? Does your state ensure that all principals are evaluated by well-trained or certified staff, especially in cases where the principal supervisor does not receive or does not pass training?

- **Data Collection and Use.** Does your state have a longitudinal data system that can measure student growth from year to year and match student, teacher and principal data? Who does (or who will) collect data and monitor the quality of your state’s principal evaluation system?¹⁴

Current Research

While principal evaluation holds great promise, the body of research on assessing principal effectiveness is still emerging. Here is what we do know: a comprehensive review of principal evaluations has found that current assessments typically are out of sync with what research has identified as the most important indicators of effective school leadership—student achievement and teacher effectiveness. Many state and district evaluations are not aligned to performance standards, valid and reliable methods for evaluation are few and far between, and little emphasis is given to evaluator training.¹⁵ In addition, few rigorous principal performance assessments exist that are intended for use in hiring, advancement and tenure decisions.¹⁶ Additional research is clearly needed to fill knowledge gaps around the quality, use and influence of principal assessments.

VAL-ED: Valid and Reliable Principal Assessment Tool

Developed with funding and support from The Wallace Foundation, the Vanderbilt Assessment for Leadership in Education (VAL-ED) was developed in 2006 and has become one of the most widely used and respected research-based evaluation tools for measuring principals’ performance.¹⁸ VAL-ED received the highest marks for reliability (consistency and stability) and validity (measuring what is it designed to measure) among eight publicly available principal assessments evaluated in a recent study by the American Institutes for Research.¹⁹

VAL-ED, aligned with the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards, measures the leadership attributes and behaviors that are related to increases in student achievement. Specifically, the tool measures six core components of school performance (e.g., high standards for student performance, rigorous curriculum, quality instruction)—the “what” of effective leadership—and six key leadership processes (e.g., planning, implementing, monitoring, advocating) in which leaders must engage to create attributes of effective schools—the “how.”²⁰ The tool also uses 360-degree feedback from teachers, principals and supervisors to inform principals’ performance.

Current State of Principal Evaluations

- Principals view performance evaluation as perfunctory, having limited value for feedback, professional development or accountability to school improvement.
- Principal evaluations are inconsistently administered; therefore, performance is inconsistently measured.
- Performance evaluations may not align with existing state or national professional standards for practice.
- Few widely available principal evaluation instruments display psychometric rigor or make testing public so that validity and reliability can be examined.¹⁷

Source: Matthew Clifford and Steven Ross, *Designing Principal Evaluation Systems: Research to Guide Decision-Making, An Executive Summary of Current Research*, 2011.



Key Elements and Considerations for Principal Evaluation Systems

As state policymakers engage stakeholders to develop and implement school principal evaluation systems, the following key elements and considerations, based on research, expert opinion and effective practice, can offer guidance.²¹

Principal Evaluation Systems Should:

- ✓ **Be designed with the direct involvement of principals and other key stakeholders.** The design of principal evaluation systems should engage building-level leaders to ensure their perspective is reflected in both the content and process of evaluation. Engaging leaders in this process builds trust and credibility for the evaluation system and ensures that the evaluation is feasible and useful for administrators.
- ✓ **Be educational.** Principal evaluation systems should provide useful, valuable and trustworthy data and actionable feedback to principals in order to advance principals' abilities to be more effective leaders within their school and community.
- ✓ **Be connected to district- and state-level systems.** Principal evaluation should be considered one component of a broader human capital management system. Performance data can be used to inform and design professional development, shape hiring practices, improve working conditions, develop incentives and inform other human resource processes that support leaders.
- ✓ **Be rigorous, fair and equitable.** The content, instruments and administration of the principal evaluation systems should be legal and ethical; allow for a thorough examination of principal practice; and be valid, reliable and accurate.
- ✓ **Include multiple rating categories to differentiate performance.** Principal evaluations should be based on clear and transparent performance expectations that are connected to a principal's work by taking into account, when possible, differences between secondary, middle and elementary school leadership approaches and various school contexts (i.e., turn-around schools; alternative schools, etc.). It also should clearly differentiate levels of performance.
- ✓ **Gather evidence of performance through multiple measures of practice.** Principal evaluations should use multiple measures to provide a holistic view of principal performance. These measures might include, but are not limited to, 360-degree surveys of staff, observations, school climate or other surveys, teacher retention rates, and weighted summative measures of school and student performance.
- ✓ **Communicate results to principals consistently and with transparency.** Principal evaluations are powerful to the extent to which feedback can be used by principals to improve their work in schools and by district staff to make personnel decisions. Feedback should include all data from evaluations and should be clear, pointed and actionable.
- ✓ **Include training, support and evaluation of principal evaluators.** New evaluation systems should be administered with consistency and fidelity, which requires that evaluators are carefully selected, trained, monitored and supported.²²

Source: Matthew Clifford and Steven Ross, *Designing Principal Evaluation Systems: Research to Guide Decision-Making, An Executive Summary of Current Research*, 2011.

Summary of Key Evaluation Elements and Considerations

Elements	Considerations
Purposes of Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement of principal practice Personnel management decisions (tenure, placement, promotion, compensation and dismissal)
Who Should Be Evaluated?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principals only, assistant principals or other school and district leaders Differentiation based on level of expertise, number of years in a particular school, responsibilities, school performance (e.g., turn-around designation) and grade configuration (elementary, middle and high school), student poverty and school accountability systems
What Should Be Evaluated?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership practices (aligned to rigorous, well-designed statewide leadership standards) Student academic achievement Teacher and organizational effectiveness
Multiple Measures of Performance and Assigned Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principal observations Classroom and site visits Surveys of students, parents and staff Peer-to-peer reviews Portfolios Local indicators such as student and teacher attendance, graduation/dropout rates, student achievement indicators Student academic growth Staff planning and development Ratings of individual measures of evidence Weighting each measure of evidence that is combined into a total score, reflecting goals and priorities Generating a total score that differentiates principal performance using multiple performance ratings
Process for Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequency (based on experience, career stage) and timing Multiple measures of evidence (observations, site visits, surveys, interviews, document analysis, etc.) and different stakeholder feedback (supervisors, staff, parents and students)
Selection, Training and Support for Evaluators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who conducts principal evaluations (superintendents, assistant superintendents, human resource directors or others) How will they be trained and supported
Data Use, Integrity and Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to valid, reliable and timely data Develop and support a robust state data infrastructure Training and use of evaluation data (professional development, personnel decisions) Evaluation data reporting (how evaluation results are shared to the education community and the public)
Implementation and Using Results to Take Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot or field test the evaluation system before implementation Time needed to administer the instrument, costs and ease of use of implementation Use evaluation data to inform decisions about preparation program design and delivery, professional development, certification, working conditions and tenure, placement, promotion, compensation and dismissal, and other state policies for school improvement
System Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation of the assessment system, once implemented, for continued quality control and improvement
<p>Source: Margaret Terry Orr, 2011; Julie Kowal and Emily Ayscue Hassel, 2010; Matthew Clifford, Ulcca Joshni Hansen, and Sara Wraight, 2012; and Matthew Clifford and Steven Ross, 2011.</p>	

State Policy Approaches

Legislators can lead efforts to adopt school principal evaluation systems that drive improvements in principals' practice while also holding leaders accountable for teacher quality and student achievement. It is important to note that a piecemeal approach to improving principals is not likely to yield dramatic results. All elements of a principal's career continuum should be inextricably linked. This continuum—which includes recruitment and selection, preparation, licensure, mentoring, evaluation and ongoing professional development—can be linked to human resource decisions, including compensation, promotion and dismissal. Furthermore, aligning state and district policies to improve the principalship can be a promising approach to achieving the goal of having an effective principal in every school.²³

Using Statewide Leadership (School Principal) Standards to Guide Evaluations

According to a new report by the George Bush Institute's Alliance to Reform Education Leadership, 47 states report using principal effectiveness standards, and many have begun aligning them to all components of a principal's career continuum.²⁴ Quality statewide standards, which describe clearly the practices of effective principals and how to measure them, form the foundation of a comprehensive leadership development system, including principal evaluation.²⁵ The 2008 revised Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium standards organize the functions that help define strong school principals under six standards that represent the broad, high-priority themes that principals must address to promote student success. Plans are underway by the National Policy Board on Education Administration (NPBEA) to revise the standards in light of recent reforms, including adoption of college- and career-ready standards and the role of principals in teacher evaluations.²⁶ The current ISLLC standards call for:²⁷

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

State policymakers can make certain that principal evaluations are guided by leadership standards that reflect the knowledge, skills and responsibilities necessary to lead today's complex school environment, emphasize improvements in teaching and learning, and hold leaders accountable for results.

State Examples

- **Iowa S.F. 277 (2007)** establishes the administrator quality program to develop statewide leadership standards for school administrators that include knowledge and skills criteria. The standards serve as the basis for accreditation of higher education preparation programs, mentoring and induction programs, evaluation and professional development.²⁸
- **Ohio H.B. 1 (2009)** requires the Educator Standards Board to develop model teacher and principal evaluation instruments and processes based on the board's standards for teachers and principals.²⁹
- **Illinois S.B. 226 (2010)** requires institutions of higher education and not-for-profit entities that offer principal preparation programs to redesign their programs to meet new standards that focus on instruction and student learning and that must be used for mentoring, evaluation and professional development in order to receive state principal preparation approval.³⁰ In 2007, **Illinois HJR 66** created a task force to develop a set of recommendations to improve school leadership preparation in the state.
- **Oregon S.B. 290 (2011)** directs the State Board of Education, in consultation with the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission, to develop and adopt statewide core teaching standards to improve student academic growth and learning. Standards must help school districts determine effectiveness of teachers and administrators, make human resource decisions, and improve professional development and classroom and administrative practices. Core teaching standards

must be research-based; developed separately for teachers and administrators; able to be customized for each school district; included and used in all evaluations in the school district; and include multiple measures of student formative and summative proficiency and progress, including performance data of students, schools and school districts.

- **Texas S.B. 1383 (2011)** requires development of leadership standards that will serve as a foundation for principal training, evaluation and professional development; requires design of a principal appraisal and professional development system based on these leadership standards; commissions a study, in collaboration with national experts, on the current leadership structures and areas in need of improvement regarding principal quality in Texas; and requires the Texas Education Agency to report to the Legislature policy recommendations based on the principal quality study.
- **California S.B. 1292 (2012)** authorizes the criteria for school principal evaluations to be based on the California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders and to include evidence of pupil academic growth, effective and comprehensive teacher evaluations, and effective school management.
- **Maine H.P. 1376 (2012)** requires the evaluation system to include standards for professional practice by which the performance of principals must be evaluated.

Measuring Performance with Student Achievement Data and Multiple Performance Measures

Several federal reform efforts—such as Race to the Top (RTT), School Improvement Grants (SIG) and NCLB waivers—have created incentives for teacher and principal evaluations based, in part, on student achievement. In addition, states are pursuing a variety of measures to determine the performance levels of principals, including growth for all students and other measures of professional practices, such as observations based on rigorous performance standards and surveys.³¹ Many states have set in statute the percentage of an evaluation that must be based on student academic growth, and they are solidifying multiple measures of performance.

State Examples

- **Colorado S.B. 191 (2010)** requires that at least 50 percent of a principal's evaluation be based on student academic growth and the effectiveness or improvement in the effectiveness of his or her teachers. The law re-

quires evaluations to include multiple measures of student growth and consideration of diverse student needs, including special education status and student mobility.

- **Oklahoma S.B. 2033 (2010)** requires quantitative and qualitative assessment components of teachers and principals to be measured as follows: a) 50 percent of the ratings of teachers and leaders will be based on quantitative components to be divided by 35 percent based on student academic growth using multiple years of standardized tests, as available, and 15 percent based on other academic measures; and b) 50 percent based on rigorous and fair qualitative assessment components. In addition, the evaluation system is to include an evidence-based qualitative assessment tool that consists of, but is not limited to: a) organizational and school management, including retention and development of effective teachers and dismissal of ineffective teachers; b) instructional leadership; c) professional growth and responsibility; d) interpersonal skills; e) leadership skills; and f) stakeholder perceptions.
- **Tennessee S.B. 7005a (2010)** creates a 15-member teacher evaluation advisory committee to develop and recommend to the State Board of Education guidelines and criteria for the annual evaluation of all teachers and principals. Requires 50 percent of the evaluation criteria to be based on student achievement data, 35 percent of which will be based on student growth data represented by the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) or comparable student growth if no TVAAS data is available, and 15 percent on other measures of achievement. The new evaluation system will be implemented during the 2011-12 school year. Mandatory evaluation criteria include prior evaluations and personal conferences to include discussion of strengths, weaknesses and remediation.



- **Florida S.B. 736 (2011)** requires at least 50 percent of a principal's evaluation to be based on student performance using student growth data over a three-year period; the remainder of the evaluation must be based on indicators aligned with statewide leadership standards, including recruitment and retention of effective or highly effective teachers, improvement in the percentage of classroom teachers evaluated at the effective or highly effective level, other leadership practices that result in improved student success/achievement and professional responsibilities. In addition, the system may include a means to give parents and teachers an opportunity to provide feedback. If less than three years of student growth data are available, the district must include the years for which data are available and may reduce the percentage of the evaluation based on student growth to not less than 40 percent. Factors such as attendance, disability status or English language learners also must be considered.
- **Michigan H.B. 4627 (2011)** requires student growth and assessment data to be the basis of at least 25 percent of a principal's year-end evaluation for the 2013-2014 school year, at least 40 percent for the 2014-2015 school year and at least 50 percent beginning with the 2015-2016 school year. The portion of the evaluation that is not based on student growth and assessment data must be based on the following for each school in which the administrator works as an administrator or, for a central office-level administrator, for the entire district or ISD:

 - An administrator's, or his or her designee's (if the designee conducts teacher evaluations), training and proficiency in using the teacher evaluation tool, including a random sampling of his or her teacher evaluations.
 - Progress made by the school or school district in meeting the goals set forth in its school improvement plan or plans.
 - Pupil attendance in the school or school district.
 - Student, parent and teacher feedback and other information considered pertinent by the superintendent or other school administrator conducting the evaluation or the board or board of directors.
- **West Virginia H.B. 4236 (2012)** requires 80 percent of a principal's evaluation to be based on professional leadership standards, 15 percent on student academic growth using two pieces of evidence at two points in time and 5 percent based on student learning growth measured by the school-wide score on the state summative assessment.
- **Wisconsin S.B. 461 (2012)** requires 50 percent of a principal's evaluation to be based on multiple measures of student performance, including performance on state assessments, district-wide assessments, student learning objectives, elementary and middle school-wide reading levels and high school graduation rates. The other 50 percent must be based on the extent to which the principal's practice meets the 2008 Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Education Leadership Policy Standards.

Using Multiple Levels of Performance and Frequency and Timing of Evaluations

In addition to setting expectations around student growth and multiple measures of performance, recent federal initiatives have encouraged states to differentiate performance using at least three performance rating levels and to regularly evaluate principals. Research suggests that evaluation systems distinguish levels of proficiency, and each level implies a different type of follow-up.³² Many states have included multiple levels of performance in their principal evaluation laws; most states require annual performance evaluations.

State Examples

- **Illinois S.B. 315 (2010)** requires that each school district establish a principal evaluation plan; stipulates that principal performance be rated as excellent, proficient, needs improvement or unsatisfactory; and requires each principal to be evaluated at least once every school year. The law also requires that principals be evaluated annually before March 1 for annual contracts and in the last year of a multi-year contract.
- **Oklahoma S.B. 2033 (2010)** requires the Oklahoma Teacher and Leader Effectiveness Evaluation System to include a five-tier rating system with the following ratings: superior, highly effective, effective, needs improvement and ineffective. Annual evaluations also must provide feedback to improve student learning.
- **Washington S.B. 6696 (2010)** requires school districts to establish revised evaluation criteria and a four-level rating system for evaluating teachers and principals. **Washington S.B. 5895 (2012)** requires all principals to be evaluated annually. Every four years, the evaluation must be comprehensive and use all eight specified criteria. In the intervening years, evaluations are focused, zeroing in on a specific evaluation criterion for professional development. Annual comprehensive evaluations must be given in the following cases:

- New principals in their first three years of employment;
- New principals in the first year of employment, if previously employed as a principal by another district in Washington for three or more consecutive years; and
- Principals receiving a Level 1 or Level 2 rating in the previous year.

School districts are encouraged to conduct comprehensive evaluations of principal performance annually.

- **Michigan H.B. 4627 (2011)** requires performance evaluation systems for teachers and administrators to provide that, if a teacher or administrator is rated as highly effective on three consecutive annual yearend evaluations, the school district, ISD or PSA may choose to conduct a year-end evaluation biennially instead of annually. If a teacher or administrator is not rated as highly effective on one of those biennial evaluations, however, he or she must again be evaluated annually.
- **Arizona H.B. 2832 (2012)** revised its teacher and principal evaluation system by requiring the State Board of Education to adopt four state performance classifications—highly effective, effective, developing and ineffective. School districts and charter schools must adopt definitions for the performance classifications in a public meeting and apply the performance classifications to their evaluation instruments by the 2013-2014 school year. The law also directs school boards to annually discuss their aggregate performance classifications at a public meeting.
- **Connecticut S.B. 458 (2012)** requires that teachers and principals be evaluated annually, rather than “continuously.” The state model evaluation system must include four performance ratings—exemplary, proficient, developing and below standards. The law also allows district programs to include periodic “formative” evaluations during the year leading up to the final, overall “summative” annual evaluation.



- **Iowa S.F. 2284 (2012)** requires annual evaluations of school administrators (previously at least every three years) to help administrators make continuous improvement, document continued competence in the Iowa standards for school administrators, or to determine whether the administrator’s practice meets district expectations. The law creates a statewide evaluation task force and requires the task force to include in its recommendations and proposal a tiered evaluations system that differentiates ineffective, minimally effective, effective and highly effective performance.

Training and Support for Evaluators

The selection, training and support of those who evaluate principals are critical to the successful implementation of a principal evaluation system. Evaluators play an important role in ensuring that principal evaluations are implemented with fidelity and the results are timely and actionable.³³ States recognize the importance of well-trained, monitored and supported evaluators and have included specific provisions in state statute.

State Examples

- **Arizona S.B. 1040 (2010)** requires the State Board of Education to adopt best practices for professional development and evaluator training.
- **Illinois S.B. 315 (2010)** provides that school boards require evaluators to participate in training on the evaluation of certified personnel provided or approved by the State Board of Education before undertaking any evaluation at least once during each certificate renewal cycle. An evaluator undertaking an evaluation after Sept. 1, 2012, must first successfully complete a pre-qualified program that must involve rigorous training and an independent observer’s determination that the evaluator’s ratings properly align to the requirements established by the state board. All evaluators were trained using online modules during the summer of 2012.
- **Indiana S.B. 1 (2011)** provides that an individual may evaluate a teacher or principal only if he or she has received training and support in evaluation skills. If a teacher or principal receives a rating of ineffective or improvement necessary, the evaluator and the employee will develop a remediation plan of not more than 90 days in length to correct the deficiencies noted in the certified employee’s evaluation.

- **Massachusetts S.B. 2315 (2012)** requires the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to pay \$3.5 million for training evaluators and school teams; districts will pay additional costs. Beginning in school year 2012-13, any district that has not begun an evaluation training program will not require teachers to be evaluated until the district has published an evaluation training schedule for teachers, principals and administrators who must be evaluated. Districts must publish a training schedule no later than Oct. 1, 2012. The DESE must submit to the Joint Education Committee by Dec. 31, 2012, a report describing how such training is being funded by the state and districts.
- **South Dakota H.B. 1234 (2012)** requires training for all those involved in teacher and principal evaluations conducted by the State Department of Education prior to conducting evaluations.
- **Washington S.B. 5895 (2012)** requires that, after Aug. 31, 2013, residency principal candidates must demonstrate knowledge of evaluation research and the state's evaluation requirements, use of student growth data and multiple measures of performance, and have practiced teacher evaluation skills. Beginning Sept. 1, 2016, the Professional Educator Standard Board must incorporate evaluation training as a requirement for continued certification.
- **West Virginia H.B. 4236 (2012)** requires evaluators to successfully complete education training in evaluation skills before performing evaluations.
- **Minnesota H.B. 26a (2011)** requires school districts to develop and implement performance-based evaluation systems that support and improve a principal's instructional leadership, organizational management and professional development and that strengthen the principal's capacity in the areas of instruction, supervision and summative evaluations. The evaluation systems also must be linked to professional development that emphasizes improved teaching and learning, curriculum and instruction, student learning, and a collaborative professional culture and must implement an improvement plan for principals who do not meet standards and set specific consequences when a principal's performance is not improved.
- **Arizona H.B. 2823 (2012)** requires alignment of professional development opportunities to principal evaluations.
- **Connecticut S.B. 458 (2012)** starting July 1, 2013, requires all teachers and principals, including initial and provisions certificate holders, to participate in professional development programs. School districts must make available annually, at no cost, at least 18 hours of professional development in each school year in small group or individual instructional settings. The professional development must, among other things, be aligned with state student academic standards; use evaluation results and findings to improve practice and professional growth; and be comprehensive, sustained and intensive enough to improve teacher and administrator effectiveness in raising student achievement.

Using Evaluation Data for Continuous Improvement of School Principals' Practice

Principal evaluation can be a powerful tool for schools and districts to improve principals' practice that, in turn, strengthens teaching and learning. States are leveraging evaluations for principals' continuous improvement.

State Examples

- **Wisconsin S.B. 437 (2010)** provides supplemental mentoring for principals in the state's lowest-performing schools who have an emergency license or permit and requires 60 hours annually of professional development for principals in the state's lowest-performing schools.
- **Maine H.P. 1376 (2012)** requires school districts to develop and implement comprehensive performance evaluation and professional growth systems for teachers and principals. Requires the systems to include a process for using information for the evaluation process to inform professional development. The systems must, among other things, include professional development and professional improvement plans for teachers and principals who receive ineffective ratings. The law also requires the State Department of Education to collect data on the success and retention of teachers and principals who complete approved educator preparation programs.

- **South Dakota H.B. 1234 (2012)** requires that teacher and principal evaluation systems, among other things, serve as a basis for programs to increase professional development and include a plan of assistance for any certified principal whose performance does not meet the school district's performance standards. The law establishes the South Dakota Education Reform Advisory Council to provide guidance when the act is implemented.
- **Wyoming S.F. 57 (2012)** requires that the principal performance evaluation system provide mentoring and other professional development activities designed to improve leadership, management and student achievement to administrative personnel whose performance is unsatisfactory.

Piloting and Implementing Evaluation Systems

Due to a mix of state, federal and philanthropic foundation pressures, states and districts are rapidly developing and implementing principal evaluation systems. Some states have incorporated pilot programs or field tests into their implementation timelines. Pilot programs provide states and districts more time to adjust their data and evaluation models, modify them based on feedback from participants and respond to implementation challenges or other lessons learned.³⁴ In addition, some states are evaluating their assessment systems, once implemented, for continuous improvement.

State Examples

- **Colorado S.B. 191 (2010)** requires the state to pilot the new evaluation system in 2012-2013 for review and improvement. The new evaluation system will become effective statewide in 2013-2014. Colorado made the decision to pilot the principal evaluation system before the teacher evaluation system to iron out potential issues and challenges on a smaller scale (principal cohort is smaller than teacher cohort) and to get building-level buy-in for the new evaluations.
- **Washington S.B. 6696 (2010)** requires the superintendent of public instruction to pilot the new teacher and principal evaluation system in the 2010-11 school year, with statewide implementation beginning in 2013-14. The law requires a report on the status of the new evaluation implementation, which must include recommendations for whether a single statewide evaluation model should be adopted, whether modified versions should be subject to state approval, what the criteria would be for state approval and challenges posed by requiring a state approval process. **Washington S.B. 5895 (2012)** revises teacher and principal evaluation systems. Implementation is to begin no later than the 2013-14 school year and is to be fully complete in the 2015-16 school year. The law details which teachers and principals must make the transition to the new evaluation system first. Beginning in the 2015-16 school year, evaluation results for principals will be used as one of several factors in human resource and personnel decisions, including, but not limited to, staff assignments and reductions in force.
- **Arizona H.B. 2823 (2012)** revises the state's teacher and principal evaluation system by allowing the State Department of Education to develop an evaluation instrument to be piloted in school districts and charter schools that choose to participate in the 2012-13 school year. Best practices must be from at least: a) one large school district in a county with at least 800,000 people; b) one small school district in a county with at least 800,000 people; c) one school district in a county with less than 800,000 people; and d) one charter school. Requires the best practices to include detailed information about: a) the implementation process for teacher and principal evaluation systems; b) the evaluation weightings; c) the types of qualitative and quantitative elements used; d) the methods by which the evaluations guide professional development; and e) the types of decisions for which the evaluations are used. It requires school boards to adopt policies for principal evaluations by the 2013-14 school year and implement the policies by the 2014-15 school year. The law also allows the State Board of Education to make periodic adjustments to align the model framework for teachers and principal evaluations with state assessments or data changes. This law amends **S.B. 1040 (2010)**, pushing back the required implementation of the evaluation system from 2012-13 to 2013-14.
- **Maine H.P. 1376 (2012)** requires that, in the 2013-14 school year, all school administrative units must develop an evaluation system that meets the new standards, in collaboration with teachers, principals, administrators, school board members, parents and the public. The performance evaluation and professional growth system will be piloted in school year 2014-2015 and will be implemented statewide in 2015-2016. The law requires implementation procedures that include:

- Regular evaluation of educators to be performed by one or more trained evaluators. The frequency of evaluations may vary, depending on the effectiveness level at which the educator is performing, but observations of professional practice, formative feedback and continuous improvement conversations must occur throughout the year.
 - Ongoing training on implementation of the system to ensure principals and evaluators understand the system and have the knowledge and skills needed to participate in a meaningful way.
 - A peer review component to the evaluation and professional growth system and opportunities for principals to share, learn and continually improve their practice.
 - Formation of a steering committee composed of teachers, administrators and others that regularly reviews and refines the performance evaluation and professional growth system to ensure that it is aligned with school goals and priorities.
- **West Virginia H.B. 4236 (2012)** allows for a multi-step statewide implementation of principal performance evaluations consistent with sound educational practices and resources available, resulting in full statewide implementation no later than the 2013-2014 school year. The law requires the State Board of Education to submit a report on its plan for the phased implementation of the evaluation system to the Legislative Oversight Commission on Education Accountability at the each year of the phased implementation.

Using Evaluation Data to Inform Human Capital and Workforce Decisions

Principal evaluation systems can serve multiple purposes, including guiding continuous improvement of principals' practice and informing personnel management decisions, including tenure, placement, promotion, compensation and dismissal. States are using principal evaluation data to leverage improvements in human capital and workforce decisions.

State Examples

- **Michigan S.B. 981 (2009)** requires principal evaluations to be used to inform decisions about the following: 1) the effectiveness of teachers and principals (ensuring ample opportunities for improvement); 2) promotion, retention and development, or professional development; 3) whether to grant tenure or full certifi-

cation, or both, to teachers and school administrators using rigorous standards and streamlined, transparent and fair procedures; and 4) removing ineffective tenured and untenured teachers and administrators after they have had ample opportunities to improve, and ensuring that these decisions are made using rigorous standards and streamlined, transparent and fair procedures. **Michigan H.B. 4627 (2011)** requires the evaluation system to ensure that, if a school administrator is rated as minimally effective or ineffective, the evaluator will develop and require the administrator to implement an improvement plan to correct the deficiencies. The plan must recommend professional development opportunities and other measures designed to improve the administrator's rating on his or her next annual year-end evaluation. The law requires dismissal of an administrator who is rated as ineffective on three consecutive year-end evaluations, if the same evaluation tool and system are used in the three evaluations.

- **Colorado S.B. 191 (2010)** provides that a teacher may be assigned to a school only with the mutual consent of the hiring principal and with input from at least two teachers employed at the school.
- **Oklahoma S.B. 2033 (2010)** provides that a school district may implement an incentive plan that rewards teachers and principals who are increasing student and school achievement, based on the state's evaluation system. In addition, districts may develop and implement incentive pay systems for teachers and principals who, among other things, work in low-performing schools or in hard-to-staff schools or districts. The law also provides that a principal who has received an "ineffective" rating for two consecutive years will not be reemployed by the school district, subject to due process. Evaluation ratings are to be used as the primary basis when a school district is determining retention or reassignment of teachers and principals.
- **Tennessee S.B. 7005a (2010)** requires evaluations to be a factor in employment decisions, including, but not limited to, promotion, retention, termination, compensation and attainment of tenure status.
- **Florida S.B. 736 (2011)** allows a school district to dismiss a teacher or principal who has two unsatisfactory performance evaluations within a three-year period, three consecutive ratings of "needs improvement" or a combination of the two. This law also applies to all charter schools.

- **Indiana S.B. 1 (2011)** provides that, if a teacher or principal receives a rating of ineffective or improvement necessary, the evaluator and principal will develop a remediation plan of not more than 90 days in length to correct the deficiencies noted in the evaluation. The law also allows a principal to decline to continue a probationary teacher's contract if the probationary teacher receives an ineffective designation on a performance evaluation; receives two consecutive improvement necessary ratings on a performance evaluation; or is subject to a justifiable decrease in the number of teaching positions or any reason relevant to the school corporation's interest.
- **Utah S.B. 64 (2012)** requires a principal's salary to be based on his or her most recent evaluation by the 2015-2016 school year. The law also provides that a school district continue to award any salary increases to a school or district administrator based on an evaluation until at least 15 percent of the administrator's salary is contingent upon the evaluation.
- **Washington S.B. 5895 (2012)** provides that, beginning with the 2015-16 school year, principal evaluations will be used as one of several factors in making human resource and personnel decisions, including, but not limited to, staff assignments and reductions in force.
- **West Virginia H.B. 4236 (2012)** provides that evaluations serve as a basis for the improvement of the performance of personnel in their assigned duties; provide an indicator of satisfactory performance for individual professionals; serve as documentation for dismissal on the grounds of unsatisfactory performance; and serve as the basis for programs to increase the professional growth and development of professional personnel.

Take Action

State legislators can lead efforts to develop and support principal evaluation systems. Depending on the state's needs and context, lawmakers have available a number of options to strengthen principal evaluation and support systems. Options for state legislatures include the following.

- ✓ **Create a State Commission or Task Force** charged with overseeing the development and implementation of principal evaluation systems that includes local policymakers, district leaders, practitioners and other key stakeholders.
- ✓ **Improve Statewide Leadership (School Principal) Standards** that focus on instructional leadership and school improvement and align them with all components of a school principal's career continuum—including recruitment and selection, preparation, licensure, mentoring, evaluation and ongoing professional development.
- ✓ **Align All Elements** of a principal's career continuum as well as state and district policies to improve and support principals.
- ✓ **Develop Principal Evaluation System Guidelines** that can include several elements: purpose of evaluation; who and what to be evaluated; multiple measures of performance; process of evaluation; training and support for evaluators; data use, integrity and transparency; implementation and using results to take action; and system evaluation.
- ✓ **Ensure Training for Evaluators** as well as ongoing support.
- ✓ **Improve Data Infrastructure and Use** to help states guide principal evaluation and support. This data also can help state and district leaders make strategic decisions and target investments to improve the principalship.
- ✓ **Reallocate Resources** to programs that are the most successful in recruiting, preparing, evaluating and supporting effective principals.



Conclusion

State legislators can play a critical role in developing and supporting principal evaluation systems that guide continuous improvement of principal practice, inform personnel management decisions, guide preparation program design and delivery, inform and renew licensure, improve working conditions and link principal evaluation to other state policies for school improvement. It is equally important to engage stakeholders—both early in and throughout the process—and monitor implementation. Legislators can request ongoing review processes and reports to make improvements to policy based on research, data and stakeholder input.

Notes

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Web Resources

Learn more about effective school leadership and strategies that work to strengthen school leadership at these sites.

National Conference of State Legislatures

www.ncsl.org

The Wallace Foundation

www.wallacefoundation.org

Alliance to Reform Education Leadership

www.bushcenter.com/portal-arel/education-leadership

Center for Reinventing Public Education

www.crpe.org

National Association of State Boards of Education

www.nasbe.org

National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal data in Education Research

www.caldercenter.org

New Leaders

www.newleaders.org

Rainwater Leadership Alliance

www.anewapproach.org

Southern Regional Education Board

www.sreb.org

National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research

www.caldercenter.org

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