

Strengthening central office support for principals

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Choosing the right partner

Purpose	Help district leaders choose appropriate partners for supporting the development and preservice experiences of school principals.
Recommended time	1–2 hours
Materials	Tool 8.1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Wallace Foundation Podcast: Districts and Universities Work Together to Improve Preparation • University Partnership Evaluation Framework, pages 3–6
Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read the overview of the University Partnership Evaluation Framework, pages 3–6. 2. Listen to the 20-minute podcast from The Wallace Foundation’s Knowledge Center (https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/pages/podcast-principal-pipelines-episode-3-districts-and-universities-work-together-to-improve-preparation.aspx). 3. Identify current and/or potential partners for supporting principal preservice and early development. 4. Review each section of the University Partnership Evaluation Framework, pages 3–5. Respond to the questions for each partner on your list. 5. Record overall strengths and opportunities for each partner. 6. Determine the partner(s) going forward and areas to define further expectations.

Choosing the right partner, continued

University Partnership Evaluation Framework

Overview

The Principal Pipeline Initiative was an initiative commissioned by The Wallace Foundation. The initiative funded six urban districts to focus on four key areas:

- **Leader standards**, or job descriptions, that spell out what principals need to know and be able to do;
- **Preservice training** that equips enrollees with the knowledge and skills districts need and is given by providers with selective admissions policies;
- **Data-informed hiring procedures** that consider only well-qualified professionals for jobs and make strong matches between candidate and school; and
- **On-the-job evaluation and support that are high quality, coherent** (i.e. linked with one another), and serve to help principals, especially novices, improve — particularly in bolstering instructional leadership.

This framework is focused on the preservice experience and helping districts choose the appropriate partner for developing building leaders.

Choosing the right partner, continued

University Partnership Evaluation Framework, continued

Leadership Standards and Expectations
Effective partners align their programs to districts' expectations of leaders. When districts have clear leadership standards or expected practices of leaders, it's important that partner organizations are preparing leaders to meet those system needs.
<p>Questions to consider include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In what ways does the partner program align to district leadership standards and expectations? 2. What evidence exists to show alignment? 3. Did staff from the partner organization collaborate with us in the development of our leadership standards and expectations?
<p>Notes:</p>

Evidence-Based Programming Aligned to District Needs
Effective partners are responsive to the needs of districts. They adapt their evidence-based programs to the local context and prepare leaders to be successful in it. Their program staff have a very strong understanding of district culture, local student, parent, and educator needs, and are quick to adjust their programs as the needs of the district shift.
<p>Questions to consider include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Has the partner developed a program aligned to best practices? What's the evidence? 2. Does the partner engage its own cycle of continuous improvement? 3. Is the partner open to input and feedback from the district? 4. Has the partnership been formalized by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or other formal agreement? 5. If the answer is "Yes," do clear roles exist for partner and district staff to ensure that the program creates participant learning experiences that meet system needs? 6. Does the program track its graduates to assess how their practice demonstrates that the program has prepared them effectively to work in the partner district?
<p>Notes:</p>

Choosing the right partner, continued

University Partnership Evaluation Framework, continued

Coordinated Recruitment, Selection, and Internship Placement
Effective partners work with the district to coordinate who is chosen for the preservice experience. They also work together to ensure that an internship experience is meaningful for all parties.
<p>Questions to consider include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does the program and district coordinate in screening and ultimately selecting candidates for the program? Are the selection criteria aligned to the district leadership standards/expectations? 2. In what ways are district personnel, including principal supervisors, engaged in this selection process? 3. How are decisions made about program participants' internship experiences? Are district and program efforts coordinated? 4. How are mentor principals and schools chosen for program candidates? What training do mentor principals receive? 5. What kind of authentic tasks are required for program participants? How does the district coordinate with the program to determine these tasks?
<p>Notes:</p>
Evidence of Program Success
Effective partners have a track record of success. A significant majority of their graduates find positions in the partner district and the program has evidence of their effectiveness.
<p>Questions to consider include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does the program have a large percentage of graduates who assume either assistant principal or principal positions in the district? 2. Do the graduates demonstrate the skills needed by the district? 3. Does the program and the district coordinate on monitoring the effectiveness of graduates?
<p>Notes:</p>

Choosing the right partner, continued

Partner Review, continued

Partner	Strengths	Opportunities

Develop a plan to select an appropriate partner or strengthen the relationship with a current one.

Source: Adapted from *Principal Pipeline Self-Study Guide*, developed by Policy Studies Associates for The Wallace Foundation, 2018

Clarifying the district-university partnership

Purpose	Help district leaders examine how districts and universities are engaging in partnerships to prepare school leaders.
Recommended time	1.5 hours
Materials	<p>Tool 8.2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video series from The Wallace Foundation: How universities and school districts can team up to redesign how principals are prepared • 4 A's Protocol, page 8
Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ask the participants to watch the videos and complete the 4A's Protocol on page 8 before convening as a group. 2. Discuss the four corner questions in the protocol. 3. Engage everyone in conversation to address the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the key takeaways from the videos? • What are the implications for our district? • What more do we need to learn in order to advance our work? • What are our next steps?

Clarifying the district-university partnership, continued

4 A's Protocol

Watch all of the videos and reflect on them collectively	
<p>What Assumptions do the speakers hold?</p>	<p>With what concepts do you most Agree?</p>
<p>With what concepts would you Argue?</p>	<p>What part of what was shared do you Aspire to create or develop?</p>

Using problems of practice to guide improvement

Purpose	Support principals in using problems of practice within a learning community.
Recommended time	1–2 hours (depending on the group)
Materials	Tool 8.3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theory of Change Questions, page 10 • Consultancy Protocol, pages 11
Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Problem of Practice Inquiry is grounded in questions that clarify the theory of change to address the issue. Each principal completes the Problem of Practice Inquiry to support clarification and planning to present it. 2. Identify an aspect of the problem and seek support or insights from colleagues. 3. In groups of at least five (but no more than 10) participants, follow the steps in the Consultancy Protocol, page 11. The times suggested should be modified to meet the needs of the situation. 4. After groups complete the protocol, reflect on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What worked well with the protocol? • Why was the person with the problem of practice asked to turn around as others discussed the problem? • How might the protocol be adjusted for future use?

Using problems of practice to guide improvement, continued

Problem of Practice Inquiry

<p>1. What is the problem I want to address?</p>
<p>2. What evidence do I have to validate the problem?</p>
<p>3. What are the desired outcomes from resolving the problem?</p>
<p>4. What strategies might I consider to address the problem?</p>
<p>5. What do I need to learn to address the problem and achieve the desired outcomes?</p>
<p>6. What behaviors (my own and those of my colleagues) need to change for my problem to be resolved?</p>
<p>7. How will I differentiate the work to meet the various learning needs of my team?</p>
<p>8. How will I monitor my progress and follow through to ensure success?</p>
<p>9. How will I measure our effectiveness?</p>

Using problems of practice to guide improvement, continued

Consultancy Protocol

(Facilitator note: When using this protocol for the first time, make sure that group members follow it as designed. Participants will want to modify the steps, especially Step 6 where presenting participants are asked to turn away from other members of the group as they discuss the problem of practice. After they have completed the protocol as it is written, participants will have opportunities to adjust for future use.)

Task	Time
1. Within each group, choose a facilitator and timekeeper. The facilitator will be responsible for making sure the protocol is followed as outlined below. The timekeeper will alert the facilitator for each timed activity.	
2. Each principal briefly shares the nature of their problem of practice and desired outcome.	10 minutes
3. Small groups determine with which problems to begin. The chosen problem should be one that group members feel is representative of problems they all face or is important enough to address first.	5 minutes
4. The principal shares the Problem of Practice Inquiry: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • States the problem: • Shares evidence of the problem: • Describes the desired outcome(s): • Shares two or three potential strategies: • Presents two or three learning goals for self and others: • Shares more of the plan if time allows: 	7 minutes
5. Listeners will ask clarifying questions.	10 minutes
6. Presenters will turn away from the listeners and take notes through the conversation.	
7. The facilitator will guide the listeners in sharing their reflections on the presenter's design by giving "warm" and "cool" feedback; finally, adding ideas that may help the Presenters develop deeper precision in their work to accomplish the goal. When possible, the conversation should include some key ideas that principals have been learning as members of their learning communities.	10 minutes
6. Presenters will reflect on the conversation and share their commitments to revise their plans and take action.	10 minutes

Identifying the potential to lead

Purpose	Provide guidance to district leaders and principals for tapping and supporting others who have the potential to move into the principalship.
Recommended time	2 hours
Materials	<p>Tool 8.4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making Space for New Leaders. <i>Principal Leadership</i>, 15(5) (see pages 13–15) • Professional Standards for Educational Leaders 2015 • Media for capturing notes and recording artifacts for virtual and face-to-face small-group discussions (e.g. tablets, laptops and applications in virtual and face-to-face small group, white boards, chart paper, note cards)
Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Principal supervisors and other district leaders will facilitate this group discussion. 2. Invite aspiring leaders, teacher leaders, and assistant principals to the conversation. 3. Before the meeting, request that participants read “Making Space for New Leaders,” pages 13–15, and scan <i>Professional Standards for Educational Leaders 2015</i>. Ask them to pay close attention to the indicators aligned with each standard. 4. Share the purposes of the meeting: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Develop deeper understanding of principal leadership; b) Provide guidance to a system that supports their potential journey into the principalship. 5. Break participants into small groups. Have each person share their reason for attending the meeting. 6. Pose the following questions to small groups for discussion: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) As you read the article and review the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders and their indicators, what excites you most about moving into a leadership position? What concerns you? b) What do you feel are your learning needs to become an effective building leader? c) What support from your supervisor may help you as you consider or prepare for this journey? 7. Have group members capture answers to the questions and prepare to share with the larger group. 8. Invite a spokesperson from each group to share highlights from the discussion. 9. After the meeting concludes, review the notes and artifacts from each group’s discussion. 10. Determine next actions.

Identifying the potential to lead, continued

Making Space for New Leaders

Principals are using various methods to cultivate assistant principal talent in their schools

Sarosh Syed



Anyone who has been a principal knows that the job can be tough. You have to shape a vision for your school. You have to help teachers with lesson plans, keep students motivated, and secure resources from the central office.

You have to manage budgets, monitor test scores, and support teachers whose students fall behind. And you do all of this knowing your job is critical: As a landmark 2004 study found, principals are second only to classroom instruction among school-related factors that contribute to what children learn in school (Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004).

Few are ready for such a deluge of responsibility the first day on the job. To ensure that school districts can benefit from a steady stream of well-prepared instructional leaders, you must also help develop the next generation of principals. That means cultivating leadership in your assistant principals, who may one day become principals themselves.

The Wallace Foundation is learning about the importance of the relationship between principals and assistant principals through its Principal Pipeline Initiative—a six-year, \$75 million effort in six school districts—to see if improved training for and management of principals can boost student achievement. Firm results aren't due until 2018, but a recent report on the six districts' early experiences suggests that if a district wants to improve the quality of its principals, it should consider cultivating its assistant principals as well (Turnbull, Riley, Arcaira, Anderson, & MacFarlane, 2013).

Principals in the six districts—Charlotte-Mecklenburg, NC; Denver, CO; Gwinnett County, near Atlanta, GA; Hillsborough County, which includes Tampa, FL; New York City; and Prince George's County, MD, near Washington, D.C.—are working to balance the needs of their schools with the needs of their assistant principals. Here are some of the ways they hope to meet both.

Share the Work

Mark Covington, principal of Samuel Ogle Middle School in Bowie, MD, faced a problem: His school had nine new teachers on board for the 2013–2014 school year. Three were falling short—test scores lagged, parents complained, and the teachers had trouble maintaining classroom discipline.

It takes time and effort to get struggling teachers up to speed. To get the job done, Covington would have had to fit into his crowded schedule hours to observe all three teachers in their classrooms, consult with instructional specialists, review the teachers' lesson plans, and meet weekly with each teacher to review progress.

Covington's approach to such challenges is simple—he shares the work with his two assistant principals, Glenise Marshall and Tamela Taylor-Orr. This method doesn't just free up Covington's schedule; it also builds the skills and confidence of his seconds-in-command. "I try to release as much authority to my assistant principals as possible," Covington said. "I think that helps them grow, so they feel like they have the autonomy to make the decisions and do what they think they need to do."

Starting in November 2013, each administrator took responsibility for one teacher. They assigned their teachers readings from the school's professional library, sat in on classes, arranged consultations with more experienced teachers, and worked with each teacher to create an improvement plan. The administrators also stayed in touch with each other, offering observations, sharing ideas, and determining the resources they needed to improve instruction. The teachers are showing progress, and Covington has noticed that the two assistant principals are growing as well. Administrative meetings were once one-sided affairs, with Covington giving direction and assistant principals taking notes. Now he sees Marshall and Taylor-Orr offering more of their own ideas. Conversations have become more technical as the two assistant principals grow more comfortable with the finer details of

Identifying the potential to lead, continued

Making Space for New Leaders, continued

classroom observation. In addition, the assistant principals are learning from the teachers. Taylor-Orr, who has been an assistant principal for eight years, lauds the opportunity to observe methods she didn't study when she learned to be a teacher.

"To be a better administrator, you have to keep up with the trends," she said. "I would say I learned to be a better administrator by some of the ideas that the new teachers are bringing in."

Use Strengths to Address Weaknesses

Jesse Salters, an assistant principal at Blake High School in Tampa, FL, would seem to be an ideal candidate for a principalship. He has a master's degree in educational leadership. He is in his ninth year as assistant principal at Blake. Five years ago, he was named assistant principal for student affairs; two years ago, he was promoted to assistant principal for administration, a position that's just one step from the principalship. Plus, he's well liked; he was one of Tampa's most accomplished high school basketball players and garners respect and admiration from the students, especially the school's athletes.

But he has been applying for a principalship in Hillsborough County for two years with little success. The problem, district officials told him, was that he didn't have enough experience as an instructional leader.

But Blake principal Jacqueline Haynes came up with a plan: She put Salters in charge of all aspects of the education of the school's athletes—health, meals, transportation, and most important, grades. She gave him a budget, assigned the students to his oversight, offered advice for how succeed in what she called "a school within a school" and then set

Salters to work. He had to monitor the students' test scores, determine where they were falling behind, and provide the resources they needed to improve. He had to review lesson plans, resolve conflicts between students and teachers, and lead meetings of teachers' professional learning communities. He also had to cover anything he did with his own budget.

"It gave me the opportunity to do all the tasks that a principal would," Salters said. "When you're in charge of a school, everything is coming at you. You have to have a clear vision; you have to be focused; you have to know where to take the school."

With this instructional experience under his belt, Salters is again interviewing for a principalship. "I'm feeling more prepared and more confident," he said. "Of course, you can't be fully prepared for what you're going to step into. But having those experiences—dealing with curriculum, dealing with data—definitely allowed me to be a lot more prepared than if I hadn't had this experience."

Get Colleagues on Board

In 2008, the School for Human Rights, a middle and high school in Brooklyn, NY, had an attendance problem. Thirty percent of the school's 400 students were often absent. According to principal Michael Alexander, the school's culture contributed to the problem. Students weren't stimulated, some feared violence at school, and many weren't disciplined for absences. He needed a dedicated program to change the culture, one that included an attendance committee, systems to track attendance, and incentives to improve it. And he needed a leader to guide the effort.

He turned to assistant principal Denise Jennings. Although Jennings had just arrived as an assistant principal, Alexander thought she had the skills the school needed; but more experienced staffers weren't convinced. "They'd been doing this for a while," said Alexander, "and they took some umbrage about having someone over them. They felt they could have done the job."

Alexander worked with each staffer to build support for the project. On the one hand, he tried to persuade reluctant members of the new attendance committee that a coordinated effort under the leadership of an assistant principal was in the best interest of students. On the other hand, he counseled Jennings to be as inclusive as possible so committee members understood that their concerns were being heard. After two years of Jennings's leadership, with counsel and support from Alexander, the School for Human Rights had a 92.9 percent attendance rate in 2012–2013, which placed it in the top quartile in the city. And although Jennings is undecided about pursuing a principalship, the experience left her feeling more confident.

"It moved me to find more experiences for myself," she said. "I can move from attendance into trying to improve career and college readiness, trying to improve academics, addressing issues with young men, trying to get their graduation rates up. I'm sure that all of those things [will] help down the road if I choose to become a principal."

Shifting Attitudes

Cesar Cedillo is principal of Bruce Randolph School in Denver, CO, a middle and high school of more than 900 students, 97 percent of whom qualify for free or

Identifying the potential to lead, continued

Making Space for New Leaders, continued

reduced-price lunch. Many students come from families with little formal education; they often assume that their education will end at high school. Seventy-seven students graduated from Bruce Randolph in the summer of 2010. According to Cedillo, just 13 went on to college.

Cedillo had to help his students think of college as a realistic goal. He needed to motivate his students, expose them to postsecondary education institutions, and build their confidence in their academic abilities. He delegated the job to assistant principal Zach McDowell.

“I needed someone with their full eyes and energies in that project,” Cedillo said. “Based on his strengths and people skills, I thought that was a task that he could tackle.”

It takes more than just a pep talk to get 900 kids to believe in themselves. McDowell had to build partnerships with community colleges and scholarship funds.

He had to recruit teachers to conduct college-readiness seminars and teach college-level classes. Most importantly, he had to shift attitudes: “The biggest challenge was advancing the mindset in the school about what our students were capable of accomplishing,” he said.

It was a long-term project, and it wasn’t always pleasant. The school had to let go of five teachers to make room for college seminars, and McDowell sometimes got frustrated with onerous registration requirements to get his students enrolled in community college courses. According to McDowell, it took three years to see a change in the school’s college enrollment rates. To keep McDowell motivated, Cedillo suggested he focus on smaller victories along the way.

Offering AP classes at Bruce Randolph was one such victory. Getting Bruce Randolph students

to take college-level classes at the Community College of Denver was another. Recruiting the Denver Scholarship Foundation, a charity that helps students find financial aid, to set up an operation at Bruce Randolph was a third. But, while McDowell waited for enrollment rates to budge, the most helpful strategy was to focus on the less measurable changes in his students’ confidence.

“Cesar really gave me a lot of good feedback about not only the quantitative measures of increased enrollment but also the qualitative indicators that we need to build with our students, how the college seminar classes started building students’ confidence and their belief that they could accomplish college-level classes,” McDowell said.

McDowell also got a boost by delegating part of his own job when he asked for volunteers to head up the new offerings at the school.

“All credit goes to the teachers,” he said. “When I put out the call for who could lead those seminar classes and who wanted to take on those postsecondary partnerships, those teachers really stepped up.”

College enrollment rates of Bruce Randolph graduates are starting to move, and so is Zach McDowell. Today he is a principal himself, overseeing the middle school while Cedillo tends to high school students, who may now be a little better prepared for college.

It’s Worth the Effort

Assistant principals have much to gain from a principal’s attention, especially experience that will serve them well when they step into the principal’s seat—but the principal benefits, too. Cesar Cedillo got a more motivated student body. Michael Alexander, in Brooklyn, NY, got a stronger attendance rate. Mark

Covington, in Bowie, MD, got three teachers who are now on the road to proving themselves in the classroom.

Still, mentoring assistant principals comes with costs. Principals have to make time in their day to coach, troubleshoot, answer questions, and intervene when assistant principals feel overwhelmed. For principals such as Jacqueline Haynes in Tampa, FL, part of the payback is the knowledge that a mentored assistant principal today can mean a first-rate principal tomorrow.

“I do it because I want to see our schools become better and our students have good educators,” she said. “I just take pride in producing a good product.” **PL**

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