To offer a single definition of a “highly effective principal” and provide recommendations for federal, state, and local policymakers as they develop principal evaluation systems and other policies affecting school leaders.

The most recent version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and subsequent regulations greatly expanded the federal role in education and significantly impacted schools and school leaders’ responsibilities. Federal policies require states to develop new evaluation systems for teachers and principals that include data on student growth measures as a “significant factor.” They also define a highly effective principal as one “whose students, overall and for each subgroup, achieve high rates (e.g., one and one-half grade levels in an academic year) of student growth.” Unfortunately, many states are using that federal guidance as rationale for an overreliance on standardized test scores in principal evaluations and are ignoring the complex and various responsibilities that principals carry out to foster high-quality instruction and learning.
NASSP acknowledges that within the school building, the principal bears the ultimate responsibility for implementing schoolwide reforms that will lead to high academic achievement for all students.

NASSP believes that quantitative and qualitative data should inform decisions at the classroom, school building and district levels. Data should therefore inform the evaluation of principals’ effectiveness.

Effective principal evaluations are:

- Created in consultation with and for the complex and various roles of principals
- Part of a comprehensive system of support and professional development
- Flexible enough to accommodate differences in principals’ experiences
- Relevant to the improvement of principals’ dynamic work
- Based on accurate, valid, and reliable information that is gathered through multiple measures
- Fair in placing a priority on outcomes that principals can control
- Useful for informing principals’ learning and progress

RECOMMENDATIONS

NASSP recommends that highly effective principals or assistant principals:

- Engage in continuous professional development, utilizing a combination of academic study, developmental simulation exercises, self-reflection, mentorships and internships
- Effectively lead teaching and learning appropriate to the needs of all students in the school, which results in measurable student academic progress
- Support, manage, and oversee the school’s organization, operation, and use of resources to achieve school improvement goals and ensure quality implementation of the programs and services identified with increasing student achievement
- Extract information from data and personalize instruction for all students to create and maintain an academically rigorous, positive, professional and safe school climate for all members of the school community
- Foster the success of each student by facilitating the development, communication, implementation, and evaluation of a shared vision of teaching and learning that leads to student academic progress and school improvement
- Actively engage the community to create a shared responsibility for student academic performance and successful personal development
NASSP recommends the following measurements, in addition to student indicators, for assessing principal performance:

- Self-assessments
- Supervisor site visits
- School documentation of classroom observations, faculty agendas, and the like
- School climate surveys
- Teacher, staff member, parent, and student evaluations
- Teacher retention and transfer rates
- Student engagement with and rates of participation in cocurricular and extracurricular activities
- Stakeholder involvement in school activities, clubs, or functions

In measuring a principal’s performance based on student indicators, states should use multiple assessments that are aligned with state standards of college and career-readiness, include performance-based measures, and measure individual student growth from year to year. NASSP suggests the use of such assessments as:

- State assessments
- Portfolios, performance tasks, and other examples of a student’s accomplishments
- Classroom-based assessments
- Interviews, questionnaires, and conferences
- End-of-course exams
- Comprehensive personal academic and graduation plans
- Assessments aligned with high school and college entrance requirements (ACT, PSAT, SAT)
- Project-based learning assignments
- Attendance rates
- Discipline referrals
- Graduation rates

NASSP recommends that school districts examine quantitative and qualitative data pertaining to both academic and nonacademic indicators in their evaluation of principals.
NASSP recommends that Congress establish a grant program to recruit, prepare, and support highly effective principals through capacity-building measures that will improve student academic achievement in high-need schools. Funds should be used to support programs for aspiring school leaders that include the following:

- A preservice residency that lasts for at least one year
- Focused coursework on instructional leadership; organizational management; the use of multiple sources of data for the purposes of instruction, development, and evaluation of teachers; and the development of highly effective school organization
- Ongoing support, mentoring, and professional development for at least two years after aspiring school leaders complete residencies and commence work as assistant principals or principals.