



## POSITION STATEMENT: HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PRINCIPALS

### ► PURPOSE

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.

### ► ISSUE

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which is the most recent version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, recognizes the importance of school leadership and its impact on school and student performance—however, it greatly reduced the federal role in education. Where federal policies once required states to develop evaluation systems for teachers and principals that included data on student growth measures as a “significant factor,” ESSA transferred the authority for creating educator evaluation systems to the states. ESSA also overturned federal regulations that had defined 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.” Previously, many states used that federal guidance as rationale for an overreliance on standardized test scores in principal evaluations and ignored the complex and various responsibilities that principals carry out to foster high-quality instruction and learning. ESSA only requires states to publicly report the “methods or criteria” used to measure teacher and principal effectiveness, so states have an opportunity to rethink their evaluation systems and the definition of a highly effective principal.



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## ▶ NASSP GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- NASSP acknowledges that within the school community, the principal bears the ultimate responsibility for building culture and leading learning that lead to high academic achievement and well-being for all students.
- NASSP provides a comprehensive view of principals' responsibilities that is based on most current educational leadership standards, including the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, the best practices of highly accomplished school leaders, and a synthesis of research in its *Building Ranks™: A Comprehensive Framework for Effective School Leaders*.
- NASSP believes that principals prepare each student for success in college, citizenship, career, and life while ensuring that each adult in the learning community continues to grow, both personally and professionally, in the service of those students and the community they represent.
- 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.
- NASSP recommends that principal performance be based on multiple measures that are objective, take into account the context in which a principal operates the school, and are not limited to student performance indicators (NASSP, 2011).
- Effective principal evaluations are:
  - o Created in consultation with and for the complex and various roles of principals
  - o Part of a comprehensive system of support and professional development
  - o Flexible enough to accommodate differences in principals' experiences and their context
  - o Relevant to the improvement of principals' dynamic work
  - o Based on accurate, valid, and reliable information that is gathered through multiple measures
  - o Fair in placing a priority on outcomes that principals can control
  - o Useful for informing principals' learning and progress

## ▶ RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FEDERAL POLICYMAKERS

- Fully fund Title II, Part A of the ESSA, which provides resources for states and districts to reform educator certification and licensure requirements, create comprehensive teacher and principal evaluation systems, offer preservice and school-based professional learning opportunities, and train principal supervisors to develop their capacity to support and coach principals as instructional leaders.

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## ▶ RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FEDERAL POLICYMAKERS – CONTINUED

- Fund programs to recruit, prepare, and support highly effective principals through capacity-building measures that will improve student academic achievement and well-being in high-need schools. Funds should be used to support programs for aspiring school leaders that align to the National Educational Leadership Preparation standards and include the following components:
  - o A preservice residency that includes at least 250 hours in field-based experiences
  - o 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
  - o 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

## ▶ RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STATE POLICYMAKERS

- Establish a definition of “highly effective principal” that ensures school leaders have the ability to:
  - o Build a school culture that nurtures each individual to live the shared norms, values, and beliefs, and to grow in a safe, caring and high-performing school community
  - o Lead learning that empowers each individual to apply the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to grow and contribute productively in a global society
  - o Engage in continuous professional development, utilizing a combination of academic study, professional learning communities, feedback tools, authentic simulations, reflection, online and in-person collaborations and learning opportunities, mentorships, coaching, and internships
  - o Effectively lead learning appropriate to the needs of each student and adult in the school, which results in measurable student academic progress
  - o Support and manage the school’s organization, operation, and use of resources to achieve student and adult success and well-being
  - o 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
  - o Actively engage the community to create a shared responsibility for student academic performance, well-being, and safety

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

#### ▶ RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DISTRICT LEADERS

- Examine quantitative and qualitative data pertaining to both academic and nonacademic indicators in their evaluation of principals.
- Use the following measurements, in addition to student indicators, for assessing principal performance:
  - o Self-assessments
  - o Supervisor site visits
  - o School documentation of classroom observations, faculty agendas, and the like
  - o School climate surveys
  - o Teacher, staff member, parent, and student evaluations
  - o Teacher retention and transfer rates
  - o Student engagement with and rates of participation in cocurricular and extracurricular activities
  - o Stakeholder involvement in school activities, clubs, or functions.

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## ▶ RESOURCES

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- National Association of Secondary School Principals (2018). *Building Ranks™: A comprehensive framework for effective school leaders*. Retrieved from <https://www.nassp.org/professional-learning/building-ranks/>
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- Wallace Foundation. (2013). *The school principal as leader: Guiding schools to better teaching and learning*. Retrieved from [www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/effective-principal-leadership/Pages/The-School-Principal-as-Leader-Guiding-Schools-to-Better-Teaching-and-Learning.aspx](http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/effective-principal-leadership/Pages/The-School-Principal-as-Leader-Guiding-Schools-to-Better-Teaching-and-Learning.aspx)

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