

National Association of State Boards of Education

➔ Shift in Emphasis in New Standards for Educational Leaders

By Stephen Prociw and Francis Eberle

Forty-five states and the District of Columbia base their standards for school leaders on the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards. First published in 1996 and revised in 2008, the standards were updated last November. More than 1,000 educational leaders provided input to the new Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL), which reflect what research and practice suggest will better match current expectations for principals: that they will provide instructional leadership to increase student achievement and well-being.

The National Policy Board for Educational Administration, a consortium of professional organizations, issued the PSEL.¹ States that wish to align their school leader standards to PSEL will need a clear understanding of how

the revised standards compare with ISLLC. The most obvious difference is structural: Whereas ISLLC standards were rooted in six principles, the new standards have ten (table 1). The added four expand principles that are present in ISLLC and clarify how the standards can be met. For example, where ISSLC standards simply directed principals to collaborate, principals under PSEL are expected to engage family members and the community in “meaningful, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial ways.”

But there are differences in emphasis as well. PSEL approaches student learning more holistically, placing greater emphasis than ISLLC did on student well-being, rather than focusing on academic rigor alone. PSEL recognizes that students must be physically and emotionally healthy in order to learn. Every ISSLC standard included the phrase “to promote the success of every student,” and every new standard reads, “to promote each student’s academic success and well-being.”

In addition, PSEL prominently features principals’ abilities to provide instructional leadership to reflect what research says is an important driver of student achievement.² The standards call on principals to develop and improve the quality of teaching by cultivating professional communities focused on student success. The standards ask principals to consider the potential of their decisions to improve student well-being and learning. For example, are the working conditions of the professional staff affecting the learning conditions of students?

An entire standard is now devoted to equity and cultural responsiveness, elevating its significance. Changing demographics require principals to foster safe, supportive learning environments for diverse student bodies.

PSEL untangles elements of the ISLLC standards and elaborates on the work needed to meet them. For example, ISLLC called for principals to act in an ethical manner and to model ethical behavior. The new PSEL standards replace this broad statement with a more specific call for principals to provide moral direction for the entire school and act in an ethical fashion based on professional norms.

PSEL simultaneously introduces new areas of practice and deepens emphasis on areas that have been less well understood. In recent years, a more developed theory of educational leadership has emerged from research that links student success to effective principals.³ The new standards are tailored for school-level positions yet remain applicable across various administrative roles: assistant principals, principals, and districts’ principal supervisors.

A SYSTEMIC VIEW OF LEADERSHIP

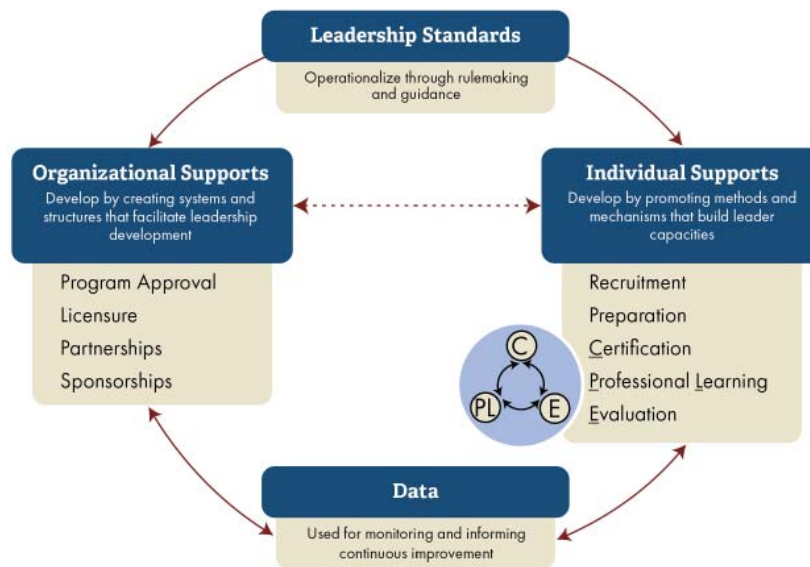
The ten domains in the PSEL can be broken down into four related clusters, although none of the domains operates in isolation. The revised standards take a systemic view of leadership. PSEL standards 1, 2, and 3 are “drivers”—standards that promote values

Table 1. Educational Leadership Standards

ISLLC 2008	PSEL 2015
1. Vision	1. Mission, Vision, and Core Values 10. School Improvement
2. Culture of Support and Instructional Program	4. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment 5. Community of Care and Support for Students 6. Professional Capacity of School Personnel 7. Professional Community for Teachers and Staff
3. Operations, Management, and Resources	9. Operations and Management
4. Collaboration with Faculty and Community	8. Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community*
5. Ethics	2. Ethics and Professional Norms 3. Equity and Cultural Responsiveness*
6. Political, Social, Legal, Cultural Context	3. Equity and Cultural Responsiveness* 8. Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community*

* Standard correlates to multiple domains.

Figure 1



These standards more accurately reflect the public and professional expectations for principals and thus deserve the attention of state boards of education.

RESOURCES

Council of Chief State School Officers. Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008. Washington, DC: CCSSO, 2015.

Hull, Robert, Jonathan Supovitz, Bobbi Newman, and Stephen Prociw. *Successful Leaders for Successful Schools: Building and Maintaining a Quality Workforce*. Alexandria, VA: National Association of State Boards of Education, 2015.

National Policy Board for Educational Administration. Professional Standards for Educational Leaders 2015. Reston, VA: NPBEA, 2015, and at www.ccsso.org/. See <http://bit.ly/1YkM3YI>.

Stephen Prociw is a research associate at NASBE, and Francis Eberle is its deputy executive director.

NOTES

1. The National Policy Board for Educational Administration replaces ISLLC. The consortium no longer exists.
2. The Wallace Foundation, *The School Principal as Leader: Guiding Schools to Better Teaching and Learning* (New York: Wallace Foundation, 2012).
3. Ibid.

that effective leaders share. They articulate a principal’s overall mission: improving student well-being and success. Standards 4 and 5 cover areas that directly affect students in the classroom, such as curriculum and assessments. They highlight the need for coherent systems and embody an expanded definition of instructional leadership. Standards 6, 7, 8, and 9 support 4 and 5. They detail actions that promote effective school and community climates, which are conducive to learning. They establish how principals create supportive professional cultures and encourage meaningful engagement with families. Standard 10 spotlights school improvement and anchors the previous nine to a model of continuous improvement.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Many related policies would be affected if PSEL were adopted. These include the following areas:

- preparation of administrators;
- program accreditation and review;
- certification;
- hiring and supporting administrators;
- recruitment, induction, mentoring, and professional development;
- evaluation;

- accountability; and
- school improvement.

To visualize how these policy areas connect with school leaders, a NASBE Study Group developed a state leadership development policy framework to help state boards think about how they can support the development of stronger school leaders and select policy levers and processes to guide their work (figure 1). State boards first must determine their authority in these related policy areas before they can determine the most effective means to develop and implement new policies.

The timing is right to review current state leadership standards. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), signed into law December 10, 2015, will require states to include at least one indicator of school quality or student success, such as school climate, in their accountability systems. The school principal is critical to developing and maintaining positive school climate.

Even though the role of the principal is likely to keep evolving, PSEL articulates the skills and abilities that educators and school leaders across the country have determined are necessary for today’s school leaders.