



PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR SELECTION AND DEVELOPMENT TOOLKIT

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Principal Supervisor Hiring guidance tool

Districts that are focused on transforming the principal supervisor role must ensure that the individuals in the position are well-prepared to engage in the new work. This means hiring principal supervisors who are aligned to the district’s vision and who have the skills, experience, and dispositions to serve successfully in a role that is crucial for city-wide change. Principal supervisors play a pivotal management role in the district and—just as importantly—they serve as “leaders of leaders,” modeling the type of student-focused leadership that a district needs in each of its principals if outcomes are going to improve for every student in every school and classroom.

Setting and Measuring the Bar

Defining Readiness

The selection guidelines captured below are aligned to the New Leaders Principal Supervisor Competency Model. New Leaders believes that the selection criteria outlined below match the responsibilities of the principal supervisor role when it is designed to support and develop principals in leading their schools to improved student achievement outcomes. A competency model that captures the skills, experiences and dispositions of a successful employee in a specific role will also reflect the common values of the district for *all* employees: how they serve students and believe in their potential and how they work with and value their colleagues and other stakeholders.

Districts should review their definition of the principal supervisor role and evaluate how closely the competencies and dispositions captured in the selection criteria below align with their expectations for their principal supervisors. In most cases, tailoring these competencies to the specific requirements of the role within a district would mean emphasizing some competencies over others within processes for development, selection, and support, rather than disregarding any of these domains.



Districts should refine hiring criteria based on their specific expectations for the principal supervisor role and an understanding of the candidate pool.

The baseline competencies for success in the principal supervisor role are a combination of both *dispositions*—what principal supervisors must believe about themselves and others and how they must approach their work—and *skills and experience*—what they must know and be able to do. The selection process for new principal supervisors must be designed to capture and weigh evidence for both of these aspects of a candidate’s readiness for the job.

It is also helpful to ask a second question as you reflect on the likely candidate pool and the areas where even the best-prepared candidates will need support to step fully into their new role as principal supervisor: **Which of these expectations do we hire for, and which will we need to train for through on-boarding and early-tenure support?** We recommend districts start with the model below and test these answers for alignment to their expectations for defining readiness for the role. Any principal supervisor selection process must be designed to measure fitness for the role in candidates with varying career paths who may currently be district employees (internal candidates) but may also be high-potential talent recruited from other districts.

Measuring Readiness

There are several ways districts can evaluate candidates for the principal supervisor role.

Evidence in Principal Performance

We believe it is crucial for principal supervisors to have demonstrated effective leadership actions, strong outcomes, and sustained leadership in a principal role, because managing and supporting principals in the work of school leadership is the single biggest responsibility for principal supervisors. Although it is certainly not the only leadership experience successful candidates could bring to bear, an authentic hiring process should look closely at candidate's experience and impact in this role.

Ideally, district systems will allow the hiring team to see the impact of internal candidates in the principal role through performance evaluation information, student outcome data, and principal supervisor input. Experience as a principal is also an important area to probe in interviews, seeking evidence for transformational leadership actions from principal supervisor candidates, and their ability to lead change over time, by working with their teams to build other leaders and sustainable systems that support their work. While having been a successful principal is an important prerequisite for the role of principal supervisor, not all high-performing principals will be well-qualified or suited for the principal supervisor role, just as not every impactful classroom teacher can transition into a coach role. For this reason, the selection criteria below are aligned to expectations for the principal supervisor role, and examples of successful practice from the principalship are matched to other methods of probing for readiness for the principal supervisor role.

Behavioral Interviewing

This interview method involves probing for evidence from a candidate's experience base. It focuses on collecting specific, situation-based information from interviewees including the task or objective for the situation, the actions of the participant, the results obtained and the level of success and participant learning that occurred. Instead of asking hypothetical interview questions ("Tell me what you would do if...") that allow candidates to speak theoretically about leadership actions, in behavioral interviewing the interviewer begins with "Tell me about a time when you...", placing the resulting conversation—and the evidence collected—firmly in the realm of the candidate's actions. Below, we recommend initial probing questions as well as follow up prompts to elicit this type of evidence from principal supervisor candidates, frequently based on their role as principals but also in other leadership roles.

Simulations: Leadership in Action

Many districts consider hiring processes for senior leadership roles that include simulation activities such as case studies, discrete leadership tasks, or role-plays to evaluate leadership candidates. These are effective in allowing candidates to provide real-time evidence of leadership actions, including analysis and problem-solving, decision-making and communication. We have also recommended simulation activities below that may be effective ways to evaluate candidate readiness for the principal supervisor role.

Selection Criteria

The selection criteria below probe readiness for the principal supervisor role through both competencies (skills and experience) and dispositions (habits of mind and beliefs). Because it is crucial to evaluate evidence of these factors of readiness together, they are grouped below, with competencies listed and defined first and related dispositions captured immediately following. In practice, experience and approaches often speak to a candidate's readiness across a multitude of these competencies, and selection processes should provide space to gather and apply evidence in comprehensive ways, supported by rubrics that include strong definitions that resonate in the district context.

1. Instructional Leadership (*Competency*)

Skills and Expertise, *demonstrated by principal supervisor candidates as the ability to:*

- Apply research-based knowledge and content, best practices, resources and current technology to address the needs of principals and schools in building instructional capacity.
- Guide a principal in applying effective instructional leadership practices within their own school context against their specific goals.
- Observe and evaluate instruction, including planning and practice, giving actionable feedback and monitoring for implementation.
- Ensure alignment among a school leader's actions, changes in learning and teaching within each classroom, and improved student outcomes.
- Act from a deep knowledge of key curricular strategies and their application within context.

including Belief in student potential (*Disposition*)

- Belief in the potential of all students, demonstrated by a relentless focus on meeting the needs of all students. Commitment to equitable opportunities and outcomes for all students, and a willingness to reinforce this expectation across the network. Commitment to the craft of learning and teaching as the most crucial lever for supporting students in reaching their potential and to establishing school communities that reflect the same.

Demonstrated by candidates in the principalship through: (examples)	Sample Questions for Behavioral Interviewing	Sample Activities or Case Topics for Simulated Demonstration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to monitor instruction and provide detailed, actionable feedback to teachers. • The ability to match school-wide instructional priorities to specific, prioritized needs for student learning, and to ensure that support and expectations for teachers are aligned to these priorities. • Strong and consistent instructional practices across classrooms throughout the school; a shared understanding of what strong instruction looks like in practice. • Implementation of a school-wide cycle for building strong instruction that includes observing teaching practice, providing detailed, actionable feedback, and following up to ensure new practices are applied and sustained. • Faithful implementation of district-wide instructional initiatives, formative assessments, and guiding frameworks in ways that are responsive to school-specific context and goals. • Evidence of the creation of an effective culture of support and high expectations for students; successful track record of addressing student engagement, attendance, and behavior by creating positive systems for goal-setting and progress monitoring in this area. • Significant, sustained improvement in student achievement outcomes. 	<p>Can you tell me about a time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you were principal and you had to implement a plan to increase student achievement outcomes? Who did you work with? How did you prioritize your strategies? How did you support your teachers in implementation? How did you monitor progress along the way to know new strategies were effective? What were the results? What would you do differently next time? • When you had to match a district-wide instructional priority (new curricula, new expectations for the instructional leadership team, new standards or assessments) to the specific context and priorities of your school? What did you do? Were you successful? How do you know? What would you do differently next time? • When you successfully cultivated leadership in someone else on your team – especially instructional leadership? How did you identify their potential? What did you do to set them up for growth? How did they impact your team and student outcomes? • Describe a practice or program you put into place to address achievement gaps, and what made it successful? 	<p>Scenario: the candidate, as principal supervisor, is conducting an observation of teacher practice together with a principal in the network. In general, instruction is ineffective in this school, and the principal supervisor is concerned that the principal is not focused on instructional rigor.</p> <p>Video observation: A teacher delivering instruction in the classroom. What does the candidate observe? What are the strengths and gaps in instructional practice? Can the candidate ground feedback in district frameworks and a common language for rigor, strategies, and impact?</p> <p>Role Play: How does the candidate manage an authentic feedback conversation with the teacher?</p> <p>Follow up: How would the candidate talk to a principal about this instructional practice, if the principal’s opinion of the quality was different from the candidate, as principal supervisor?</p> <p>Role Play: Have the principal supervisor candidate give feedback to the principal around his/her practice as an instructional leader. This is an opportunity for the evaluation team to observe the principal supervisor candidate in particular for a coaching orientation, even if they eventually move to more directive feedback depending on the nature of the role play.</p>

2. People Management & Development

Skills and expertise. *Principal Supervisor candidates will need to demonstrate the ability to:*

- Apply effective management practice in working individually with principals in the network by supporting their performance and professional growth.
- Support network principals and other direct reports with individual goal-setting and monitoring progress towards those goals, ensuring accountability and providing guidance, strategies, and support resources as appropriate.
- Have evidence-based, authentic conversations about both performance and professional growth.
- Identify and evaluate talent, both for development within the school leadership pipeline and as part of a hiring process for leadership roles within the network. This includes strong skills in interviewing and applying evidence-based practices for evaluating skills within a talent identification or hiring process.

We expect that principal supervisors demonstrating this competency will also need support after hiring to build skills in other crucial areas of this competency:

- Apply a diverse set of coaching strategies, including facility with both inquiry and advocacy protocols with direct reports, and seek to apply coaching strategies in the majority of management situations to build capacity in leaders on the team
- Implement the district’s principal evaluation system with both an accountability and a developmental lens.

including A commitment to continuous improvement and learning

- Commitment to building adult professional practice. Personal investment in guiding the success of others and in building collective leadership capacity. A focus on self-reflection and personal professional growth and development and modeling this for others. A personal growth mindset, as well as the ability to identify and cultivate the same in others. A commitment to staying in “coaching” mode with direct reports as often as possible, avoiding telling or directing, so that team members can build their independent leadership skills.

Demonstrated by candidates in the principalship through: (examples)	Sample Questions for Behavioral Interviewing	Sample Activities or Case Topics for Simulated Demonstration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timely sourcing and hiring of strong teacher candidates as well as other team members within the constraints of the district hiring process. • Creation of a school staffing plan to strategically align specific faculty members to roles that best utilize and develop their skills and in teams that can be effective. • Successful track record of implementing the district’s teacher evaluation system with fidelity as both an accountability and a developmental tool and in support of a strong instructional culture. • Experience identifying and addressing under-performing teachers. • After a possible early period of higher turnover, evidence of relatively high rates of staff retention. • Robust implementation of distributive leadership strategies to establishing effective teams such as a school leadership team, grade-level or subject-level teams, a school culture and discipline team, and others as appropriate to ensure teacher leadership and school-wide ownership of strategic priorities. • Evidence of success as a leadership talent developer, with candidates advancing from his/her school to leadership roles in other schools or central office functions, or as a potential successor for the principal at his/her school. 	<p>Can you tell me about a time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you worked closely with someone on your team to support their professional growth? How did you set developmental goals? How did you monitor progress? How did you support their growth with resources or opportunities? What were the results at the end of the year? • When you had to remove a teacher from your building? What were the circumstances? How did you make the decision? Would you do anything differently next time? • When you were particularly successful in developing your school staffing plan to match your team to your school needs? What were the key leadership decisions you made? Why did you set your team up like you did? What were the results? 	<p>Video observation: A principal sharing feedback with a teacher. How would the principal supervisor candidate share feedback with the principal to strengthen his/her practice?</p>

3. Team Learning and Professional Development

Skills and Expertise *demonstrated by principal supervisor candidates as the ability to:*

- Apply a strong background in adult learning theory and in the design and facilitation of Communities of Practice.
- Match network goals to adult professional development needs and provide for aligned learning experiences.
- Apply experience in designing and delivering adult learning opportunities and connecting practitioners with concepts, resources, and strategies that support their own professional development.
- Measure impact of adult learning opportunities and monitor ongoing changes in practice.

Including A commitment to continuous improvement and learning

- Commitment to building adult professional practice. Personal investment in guiding the success of others and in building collective leadership capacity. A focus on self-reflection and personal professional growth and development and modeling this for others. A personal growth mindset, as well as the ability to identify and cultivate the same in others. A commitment to staying in “coaching” mode with direct reports as often as possible, avoiding telling or directing, so that team members can build their independent leadership skills.

We believe that this is a domain where new principal supervisors will need a great deal of support to make the transition from school leadership, where principals can have a more direct and hands-on approach to practice development, to the principal supervisor role with its focus on facilitating leadership development and impacting schools from one degree of remove. Selection should focus on the domains of the principal role where candidates can demonstrate the baseline skills that can be refined once new principal supervisors are in the role.

Demonstrated by candidates in the principalship through: (examples)	Sample Questions for Behavioral Interviewing	Sample Activities or Case Topics for Simulated Demonstration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of the creation of a successful school-wide community of practice among faculty and staff focused on pedagogy, content knowledge and alignment, and adult efficacy in ensuring student outcomes. Evidence of having created the capacity for effective adult peer learning in structures beyond school-wide PD sessions. • Evidence of having created teacher-team or PLC level communities of practice. • Evidence of successful design and facilitation of adult learning opportunities matched to the school’s goals and prioritized strategies, including successful utilization of school-based professional development time such as monthly staff meetings or designated professional development days. 	<p>Can you tell me about a time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When meaningful professional development and adult learning happened at your school or on your team? What was your role? How were others engaged? How do you know the learning was meaningful? What changed in your building or on your team as a result? • What were the adult learning goals at your school or for your team? How did you determine these? How did you go about making sure they were met? Were they? Why or why not? What would you do differently next time? • You used data with your team to create urgency around student needs and to support problem solving to develop strategies for addressing deficits in outcomes? 	<p>Simulation exercise: Candidates could be presented with a simulated activity focused on the design of an effective professional development session.</p> <p>Activity: Candidates could review a draft professional learning session plan with strengths but also flaws and areas for improvement and then draft a short memo with recommendations for improvement.</p>

4. Strategic Planning and Data-Driven Implementation

Skills & Expertise demonstrated by principal supervisor candidates as the ability to:

- Apply a deep understanding of district-wide structures for planning and progress monitoring, coupled with the ability to use them in an organic, school-driven process of diagnosing, prioritizing, planning, implementing and monitoring progress as demonstrated by student data and other outcomes.
- Monitor and manage school progress through use of qualitative and quantitative data and strong practices of planning and follow-through to determine impact.
- Apply an understanding of how schools progress towards strong outcomes through improvements in practice, culture, and systems by applying the cycle of improvement outlined above.
- Demonstrate capacity to build a culture of reflective practice and goal-driven action within a school and a network of schools.
- Manage time well as a crucial resource, both within the context of personal practice and—through support of the principal—within schools as well.
- Build coherence between multiple district initiatives and supports, so that principals can see how all expectations fit together and support the work, and effectively implement and communicate this coherence with their own school teams and communities.

including Focus on results

- Focus on evidence of impact and reaching goals, combined with a tenacious and flexible pursuit of results. Focus on time management and matching effort to the highest-priority actions. A commitment to high expectations and—when they are achieved—to celebration.

New Principal Supervisors will need support on district-wide systems for planning and their specific role as principal supervisors in accountability and in using results as a management tool, but new principal supervisors should already demonstrate facility with district-wide planning processes at the school level as a principal.

Demonstrated by candidates in the principalship through: (examples)	Sample Questions for Behavioral Interviewing	Sample Activities or Case Topics for Simulated Demonstration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful application of the cycle of goal-setting, action planning, implementation, and adjusting practice with measureable impact on school improvement. • Successful school-based practices for monitoring progress through data by establishing aligned data streams and building practices of data-driven analysis throughout the school team. • Building a culture of reflective practice throughout the school in both adult staff members and the student community. • Successful alignment of district-designed planning and progress monitoring systems to the school context in support of a school-driven improvement plan. • Successful practices managing time, including establishing an effective and strategic school schedule and calendar prioritizing instructional improvement, as well as evidence of prioritization within personal leadership practice, spending time on most strategic tasks. 	<p>Can you tell me about a time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you faced a perplexing challenge at your school or on your team and applied a cycle of learning to address it? Who did you work with in determining and implementing a solution? How did you use data to understand your challenge? What were the specific actions you planned? How did you monitor implementation? What were your results? What did you learn and what did you do differently moving forward? • When you effectively maximized the use of time in your school building as a principal? Through the design of a master schedule? Through an emphasis on bell-to-bell instruction? • When you were particularly effective at applying a district-wide planning process (for ex. budgeting or hiring) to achieve your school-specific goals as a leader? How did you balance the district-wide requirements of this process with the specific needs and context of your school? • When you had to address budget cuts in your school or department, and how you approached reducing resources while maintaining your school/team priorities and goals? 	<p>Case study: School data, context, and challenges. Teacher and funding resources described. New principal entering the school. How would the candidate advise the principal to prioritize solutions, deploy resources, and monitor results?</p> <p>Simulation exercise: “In Box” activity, with a variety of artifacts representing principal supervisor tasks both urgent and important, to collect evidence on prioritization and time management.</p>

5. Communication & Stakeholder Engagement

Skills & Expertise. *demonstrated by principal supervisor candidates as the ability to:*

- Lead from a place of commitment to the school leader’s role in implementing a vision and expectations for students and other stakeholders, and an understanding of the importance and the means for engaging all stakeholders in support of the school’s work with students.
- Communicate consistently the system’s values, beliefs and priorities.
- Gather input from a broad range of stakeholders to inform personal practice and recommendations for changes in team goals and priorities.
- Provide leadership to the network in a way that fosters a trusting, reciprocal relationship with principals, direct reports, and other stakeholders.
- Use a broad range of communication skills to build and reinforce relationships. Communicate effectively with all stakeholders within the network, employing strong listening, speaking, and writing skills.

including Commitment to Stakeholder Engagement

- Commitment to broad and appropriate stakeholder engagement and a demonstrated respect for all members of a school community. Willingness to work with and through others. Comfort with a facilitative model of leadership.

Demonstrated by candidates in the principalship through: (examples)	Sample Questions for Behavioral Interviewing	Sample Activities or Case Topics for Simulated Demonstration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track record of establishing a school-wide vision and culture that is owned collectively and values the contributions of all stakeholders (students, parents and family members, faculty and staff, as well as other community members and resources). • Demonstrated success in communicating with—and building relationships with—a diverse set of school stakeholders, utilizing a wide range of listening, writing and speaking skills. 	<p>Can you tell me about a time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you had to balance competing interests within your school or across groups served by your team? What were the circumstances? How did you proceed? Were all your stakeholders satisfied in the end? Why or why not? What would you do differently next time? • When you had to challenge someone about actions or words that were antithetical to your school’s vision? What did you do? Were you successful? What would you do differently next time? • When you communicated a decision or important message and it was met with a surprising reaction? What did you do next? Would you do anything differently next time? • When a situation created anxiety and hostility within your school community. How did you address this? What strategies did you bring to bear? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case Study: addressing a need for school policy change (technology use by students, for example). How would the candidate, as principal supervisor, make a decision and communicate it both to principals in the network and also to the broader community? • Role Play: How would the principal supervisor coach a principal in sharing this policy change with a range of stakeholders, each with different interests and questions?

6. Problem Solving

Skills & Expertise demonstrated by principal supervisor candidates as the ability to:

- Creatively identify and match system resources—time, talent, and funds—to specific school needs and priorities
- Apply skills in collective problem-solving, demonstrated success in building a shared understanding of a challenge and enlisting input and buy-in for addressing the problem.
- Ensure problem-solving is focused on transformational change, impacting actions, outcomes and beliefs in support of meaningful change.

including Resiliency

- Commitment to action and individual agency, especially when faced by challenges or complexities. Commitment to personal responsibility and a strong sense of personal efficacy. Grit and tenacity, even when faced with setbacks, mistakes or challenges.

And Problem Solving Orientation

- Commitment to problem-solving with a focus on root causes and flexible, sustainable solutions. Creativity in understanding issues, engaging stakeholders in determining solutions, and applying resources for results.

While candidates must bring skills and experience in matching resources to school needs and priorities, early support for new principal supervisors should focus on what this means in that role: where principal supervisors should be focusing their time as well as what their role is in identifying, matching, and marshalling central office resources.

Demonstrated by candidates in the principalship through: (examples)	Sample Questions for Behavioral Interviewing	Sample Activities or Case Topics for Simulated Demonstration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to apply problem-solving frameworks to identify and address root causes of challenges. • Successful maintenance of a personal network of problem-solvers and internal district resources on call to address school priorities. • Evidence of success in addressing and moving through school challenges by creatively and flexibly applying internal and—where available—external resources of time, talent, and funds. • Evidence of having led a culture of problem-solving, initiative, and creative resource use within the school. 	<p>Can you tell me about a time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you identified a challenge in your school or on your team where the solution required resources (team members, funds) you didn't have? What did you do? What were the results? • When you reached outside of your school or team to access the resources you needed to solve a problem? How did you do this? What were the results? • When you faced an obstacle that couldn't be overcome? What did you do instead? What were the results? • When you implemented a plan to address a challenge and it didn't work? What did you do next? What were the results? 	<p>Case study: School data and challenges, with information about the school budget and/or team: how would the candidate, as principal supervisor, advise this principal to prioritize solutions and align resources?</p>

7. Systemic thinking

Skills & Expertise *demonstrated by principal supervisor candidates by the ability to:*

- Advocate within the central office for needed changes in goals, policies, initiatives, and resource allocations.
- Represent district-wide strategy and initiatives within their network.
- Apply principles of system design to create sustainable and equitable solutions.

including A commitment to systemic solutions

- Commitment to systems-building and equitable solutions. Focus on identifying the implications of leadership actions across a wide range of factors. Awareness of the impact of personal leadership voice within a complex organization. Interest in sustainable change over “quick fixes.”

This, too, is a competency where new principal supervisors may require significant support in order to make the transition from a school (or a specific central office role) to a role where they will be considering district-wide implications. For this reason, we recommend that districts focus selection on the baseline competencies—and the dispositions—that can be demonstrated in the principalship.

Demonstrated by candidates in the principalship through: (examples)	Sample Questions for Behavioral Interviewing	Sample Activities or Case Topics for Simulated Demonstration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible application of district-wide policy, processes, frameworks and resources to meet school-specific context and needs. • Demonstrated action based on an awareness of complex and interdependent consequences. • Demonstrated success at the school-level in building equitable policies and systems and in balancing competing interests and priorities. • Commitment to district-wide goals. 	<p>Can you tell me about a time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You had to make a leadership decision that impacted some individuals favorably but presented challenges for others? How did you balance these interests? How did you come to a decision? How did you communicate that decision? What were the results? • When you made a decision that had unintended consequences? What happened? How did you address this? What would you do differently next time? • When the easiest pathway to an outcome would be to bend the rules instead of work within boundaries to solve your challenge? What path did you take? Why? What were the results? • When you were particularly effective at applying a district-wide planning process (for ex. budgeting or hiring) to achieve your school-specific goals as a leader? How did you balance the district-wide requirements of this process with the specific needs and context of your school? • Describe your approach to meeting the needs of special education students within your school. What did you put into place that was aligned with the resources you had available, your broader school goals, and within constraints of district policy and school law? • Tell us about a time that you created an inclusive academic schedule to ensure equity and meet the needs of an underrepresented student group while addressing the needs of all students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role play; Principal Supervisor has to have an evidence-based, authentic conversation with a principal who wants to hire a highly qualified teacher outside of the district hiring process: how does the candidate work with the principal to make sure they can secure this talented individual while representing the district policy? • Case study: An experienced principal makes a compelling case to be exempted from a new district curriculum initiative. What decision would the candidate make, and how would s/he respond to the principal? What parameters would the candidate use in making the decision?

Applying Data Gathered During the Selection Process

One purpose of the selection process is to establish and measure “the bar” for candidates—an absolute definition of readiness measured through the selection process. At the same time, districts are well-served by designing a hiring process that provides information beyond a ‘pass/fail’ measurement of eligibility. A hiring process that yields information about candidates’ relative strengths and weaknesses provides meaningful information that can be applied in a number of important ways:

For Hiring

- Candidates who meet the hiring threshold and are offered the role of principal supervisor also need to be matched to a specific available network. These networks will have varying profiles of schools and principals in them, and the needs for expertise, skills, and personal leadership styles will differ. At times, a network profile will lead directly to a search for a specific type of principal supervisor candidate. Data gleaned about candidates during the hiring process should support the art of the match between a specific principal supervisor and the schools in his or her network.

For First Year Support

- Once principal supervisors are hired, data on relative leadership strengths can shape the focus and content of onboarding and first year support. Beyond the skills and knowledge every new principal supervisor will need, data from the hiring process can inform both shared learning experiences as trends in development needs are identified and also differentiated support for new principal supervisors whose particular experience profile requires specific support and mentoring.

For Managing the Pipeline

- Broader trends across applicants—and even across years—can also inform district strategy for strengthening the principal supervisor pipeline. This can take the form of identifying additional opportunities to make available for prospective principal supervisors to build their experience and practice the leadership skills required for the role. It may lead to new strategies for exposing high-potentials within the pipeline to other aspects of district leadership or providing targeted content training. *For more information on developing Principal Supervisors, see Tool #1: Principal Supervisor Pipeline Recommendations.*

Developing a pipeline of future principal supervisors

Preparing for Success as an Impactful Principal Supervisor

High-potential future candidates for the principal supervisor role benefit from the opportunity to practice skills and develop experience that will prepare them for that role. Strong preparation impacts both performance in the role (success) and perceptions about its sustainability (retention), thus districts benefit from thoughtful preparation of future district leaders.

Research has shown that the richest professional learning opportunities are job-embedded, accounting for 70 percent of an individual's development.¹ These are also the most accessible and efficient opportunities for districts to provide to prospective leaders, although they do require districts to focus time and attention on identifying opportunities, matching them with high-potential developing leaders, and—in some cases—providing central district resources to ensure the right opportunities are available. Because this is such a high-leverage strategy, we focus the majority of our recommendations in this domain.

It is worth noting that an additional 20 percent of professional growth can be ascribed to the type of coaching and feedback professionals get from strong managers, mentors, and well-positioned peers. For this reason, districts should consider enriching these developmental experiences by coupling them with mentorship programs, communities of practice, and support for existing district leaders to cultivate leadership talent on their teams. Finally, 10 percent of learning is supported by targeted professional development, and there are opportunities for districts to provide focused opportunities for developing content knowledge in district-wide strategies, processes, and/or tools.

Experience as a Principal

We recommend that everyone who is targeted for development as a potential principal supervisor has multiple years of experience as a principal and has demonstrated broad success in that role. The attention within the education field on the principal supervisor role is largely driven by a growing understanding of the importance and impact of principals and school leadership. To understand the competencies that define an effective principal supervisor, it's important to understand the evolving expectations for the principals they manage, driven by research on principal effectiveness. A principal who serves as a true instructional leader views student learning as the primary purpose of schooling. Successful principals focus on building strong instruction in their schools through establishing a shared vision of effective instructional practice, ensuring alignment and rigor of curriculum and unit/lesson plans, and using data to inform and improve instruction. They reinforce these expectations by observing, sharing feedback, and following up to ensure meaningful practice change on the part of their teachers. Their success in these areas results from a strong focus on talent development and adult learning in support of student outcomes: they recruit the right teachers and other staff members, match them skillfully to roles, and build teams with distributive leadership to ensure shared ownership and engagement in instructional outcomes. Increasingly, there is a focus on the importance of the principal's role in ensuring a culture of student support and high expectations at each school, and in working with the staff, students, and other stakeholders to ensure that all students are valued and provided with the expectations, structures, and supports needed to be successful. Finally, successful principals operate within their district context, and understand how to work within district constraints to effectively align all systems and resources to meet their school goals.

¹ The 70:20:10 Model in Learning and Development was developed by Morgan McCall and his colleagues Robert W. Eichinger and Michael M. Lombardo at the Centre for Creative Leadership in the year 1996.

These principals must be supported by strong managers who themselves deeply understand the role of the principal and have demonstrated success in school leadership. An effective principal supervisor should be able to bring her expertise to bear in each area of the principal's role. Defining leadership competencies for the principal supervisor is particularly important because they serve as leaders of leaders: they must model leadership knowledge and practice with their direct reports and more broadly in the district.

In order to be successful as a principal supervisor, someone in that role must (1) have demonstrated effective leadership actions and strong outcomes in a principal role and (2) have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that allow them to develop this practice in others. Principal supervisors should have the opportunity to develop and demonstrate these skills before taking on the role, and they may also need support in applying these skills in new ways as principal supervisors. For example, principal supervisors stepping into the role after the principalship may be very comfortable with direct management relationships, but may need to practice peer-to-peer engagement to solve problems and to marshal resources from across the organization.

The competencies below also relate to two other broad responsibilities of the principal supervisor role. Principal supervisors serve as an important pivot between the needs of individual schools and principals and the priorities and needs of the broader school system. They influence the design of district policies, goals, and initiatives based on their experience of how these elements play out at the school and student level. Once the district vision, goals, policies, and initiatives are established, they ensure alignment between the goals and priorities of individual schools and the goals and priorities of the larger system. And finally, principal supervisors broker resources and supports from across the central system to meet the specific needs of individual schools and leaders.

Because these responsibilities related to central office policies and functions are so crucial, and because new principal supervisors who are hired directly from the principalship often lack important access to central office perspectives, resources, and skill-sets, our recommendations below should guide districts in thoughtfully considering other leadership roles beyond the principalship that can provide high-potential candidates with exposure to these areas, either as a next step for their career progression or through lighter-touch participation in shorter-term committees or summer duties.

Building Skills and Experience

We have outlined below a set of principal skills and experiences that rising system leaders should be building and refining. As district leaders think about building their pipeline, it's important to begin by defining expectations for the role's responsibilities and impact. Ensuring effective principal supervisors requires both refining opportunities for their development before they are selected for the job, and meaningful support for new principal supervisors through an onboarding and early tenure process that fills gaps in their skills and knowledge. Over time, stronger preparation and pipeline development will change support requirements for new principal supervisors.

1. Instructional Leadership, *demonstrated as the ability to:*

- Apply research-based knowledge and content, best practices, resources, and current technology to address the needs of principals and schools in building instructional capacity.
- Guide a principal in applying effective instructional leadership practices within their own school context against their specific goals.
- Observe and evaluate instruction, including planning and practice, giving actionable feedback and monitoring for implementation.
- Ensure alignment among a school leader's actions, changes in learning and teaching within each classroom, and improved student outcomes.
- Act from a deep knowledge of key curricular strategies and their application within context.

Opportunities for Preparation in the Principal Supervisor Pipeline		Areas for Support: Principal Supervisor Onboarding and 1 st Year Support
In- Role Preparation as a Principal	Other Developmental Opportunities from the District	
<p>Preparation for instructional leadership can begin at the assistant principal or teacher leader level, and should continue through the principalship. Future principal supervisors should have the ability to hone their skills by practicing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring instruction and providing detailed, actionable feedback to teachers through both informal and formal observation. • Matching school-wide instructional priorities to specific, prioritized needs for student learning, and ensuring that support and expectations for teachers are aligned to these priorities. • Creating and maintaining an effective culture of support and high expectations for students; successfully addressing student engagement, attendance, and behavior by creating positive systems for goal-setting and progress monitoring. • Faithful implementation of district-wide instructional initiatives, formative assessments, and guiding frameworks in ways that are responsive to school-specific context and goals. • Impacting student achievement outcomes through team and—ultimately—school-wide leadership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service on a central Curriculum Team, working on curricular alignment to standards on the district level, developing or advising on the selection of aligned curricula. • Service on a central Instructional Standards team, advising on the development or revision of the definition of instructional expectations within the system. • Work in a dedicated Curriculum and Instruction staff role for the district, especially those providing direct support to schools and school leaders around instructional strategies, assessments, or curriculum implementation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Principal Supervisors will need support to deepen their understanding of the district-wide instructional needs, priorities, strategies and resources, so that they can support implementation across their network in flexible ways. • They will also need focused training and support for their role as managers and monitors of implementation. • As part of preparation for their role as evaluators of principal performance, principal supervisors will need to have a deep understanding of the expectations for principals as instructional managers.

2. People Management and Growth, *demonstrated as the ability to:*

- Apply effective management practice in working individually with principals in the network by supporting their performance and professional growth.
- Support network principals and other direct reports with individual goal-setting and monitoring progress towards those goals, ensuring accountability and providing guidance, strategies, and support resources as appropriate.
- Have evidence-based, authentic conversations about both performance and professional growth.
- Apply a diverse set of coaching strategies, including facility with both inquiry and advocacy protocols with direct reports, and seek to apply coaching strategies in the majority of management situations to build capacity in leaders on the team.
- Implement the district’s principal evaluation system with both an accountability and developmental lens.
- Identify and evaluate talent, both for development within the school leadership pipeline and as part of a hiring process for leadership roles within the network. This includes strong skills in interviewing and applying evidence-based practices for evaluating skills within a talent-identification or hiring process.

Opportunities for Preparation in the Principal Supervisor Pipeline		Areas for Support: Principal Supervisor Onboarding and 1 st Year Support
In- Role Preparation as a Principal	Other Developmental Opportunities from the District	
<p>Future principal supervisors in the principalship should have the ability to hone their skills by practicing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timely sourcing and hiring of strong teacher candidates as well as other team members within the constraints of the district hiring process. • Creation of a school staffing plan to strategically align specific faculty members to roles that best utilize and develop their skills and to teams where they add maximum value. • Implementation of the district’s teacher evaluation system with fidelity as both an accountability and developmental tool, and in support of a strong instructional culture. • Identifying and addressing under-performing teachers. • Implementation of distributive leadership strategies, including establishing effective teams to ensure teacher leadership and school-wide ownership of strategic priorities. • Talent development, with a demonstrable impact on the performance of teams over which they have leadership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve as trainers or mentors for new teachers at other schools, either by serving as faculty for a summer institute or as mentors through cross-school collaboration. • Develop other school leaders through roles as mentors to newer or struggling principals (relevant for highly effective principals). • Serve as managers of rising school leaders at talent “hot spot” schools within the district (districts should explore opportunities to create and incentivize these practices). <p>In many of these roles, the district can provide training and support on the specific skills of gathering evidence of school leader practice aligned to local standards and coaching school leaders against identified growth areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New principal supervisors, who will have had experience with the principal evaluation system as principals being evaluated, will need extensive support for their new role as evaluators, starting with a comprehensive understanding of the vision for school leadership and how it is translated into performance standards. • They also need information and practice connecting the information they collect about principal skill and performance deficits to strategies and resources for improving practice. • New principal supervisors also benefit from building their portfolio of developmental coaching skills and frameworks to prepare them for the talent development focus of the role. • They also need space to practice holding authentic conversations about both performance and professional growth with principals and others in their network, and this is fertile ground for principal supervisor communities of practice.

3. Team Learning and Professional Development, *demonstrated as the ability to:*

- Apply a strong background in adult learning theory and in the design and facilitation of communities of practice.
- Match network goals to adult professional development needs and provide for aligned learning experiences.
- Apply experience in designing and delivering adult learning opportunities and connecting practitioners with concepts, resources, and strategies that support their own professional development.
- Measure impact of adult learning opportunities and monitor ongoing changes in practice.

Opportunities for Preparation in the Principal Supervisor Pipeline		Areas for Support: Principal Supervisor Onboarding and 1 st Year Support
In- Role Preparation as a Principal	Other Developmental Opportunities from the District	
<p>Future principal supervisors in the principalship should have the ability to hone their skills by practicing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a successful school-wide community of practice among faculty and staff focused on pedagogy, content knowledge and alignment, and adult efficacy in advancing student outcomes. • Creating the capacity for effective adult peer learning in structures beyond school-wide professional development sessions. • Creating effective teacher teams or professional learning communities. • Designing and facilitating adult learning opportunities matched to a school’s goals and prioritized strategies, including successful utilization of school-based professional development time such as monthly staff meetings or designated professional development days. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate learning opportunities for other principals within the district (for highly effective principals). The district can provide developmental feedback on how principals design and structure effective adult learning sessions with other principals. • Serve on committees to propose and design professional learning sessions for principals, providing input to central office teams and staff. • Design and deliver professional learning to teachers at a system level, to continue practicing skills in designing and delivering effective adult learning beyond their own school community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitating formal professional development opportunities is often an area of growth for new principal supervisors, who as principals often employ a more directive and hands-on approach to shaping adult learning. • Many new principal supervisors will need support for their role as facilitative leaders of a principal community of practice, designing and facilitating authentic learning opportunities for principals, who—as leaders themselves—need space to hone their skills and their problem-solving abilities.

4. Strategic Planning and Data-Driven Implementation, *demonstrated as the ability to:*

- Apply a deep understanding of district-wide structures for planning and progress monitoring coupled with the ability to use them in an organic, school-driven process of diagnosing, prioritizing, planning, implementing and monitoring progress as demonstrated by student data and other outcomes.
- Monitor and manage school progress through use of qualitative and quantitative data and strong practices of planning and follow-through to determine impact.
- Apply an understanding of how schools progress towards strong outcomes through improvements in practice, culture, and systems by applying the cycle of improvement outlined above.
- Demonstrate capacity to build a culture of reflective practice and goal-driven action within a school and a network of schools.
- Manage time well as a crucial resource, both within the context of personal practice and—through support of the principal—within schools as well.
- Build coherence between multiple district initiatives and supports, so that principals can see how all expectations fit together and are able to effectively implement and communicate this coherence with their own school teams and communities.

Opportunities for Preparation in the Principal Supervisor Pipeline		Areas for Support: Principal Supervisor Onboarding and 1 st Year Support
In-Role Preparation as a Principal	Other Developmental Opportunities from the District	
<p>Future principal supervisors in the principalship should have the ability to hone their skills by practicing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applying a cycle of goal-setting, action planning, implementation, and adjusting practice with measureable impact on school improvement. • Monitoring progress with data by establishing aligned data streams and building practices of data-driven analysis throughout the school team. • Building a culture of reflective practice throughout the school in both staff members and the student community. • Aligning district-designed planning and progress monitoring systems to the school context in support of a school-driven improvement plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve in roles that take part in developing district planning and progress-monitoring policies and practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New principal supervisors will require support to develop a deeper understanding of district-wide systems for planning and progress monitoring, including understanding the role of school-based plans, data, and outcome tracking in district management. • They will also need training to understand their role in managing these processes, using their implementation and the results to manage their own network.

5. Communication and Stakeholder Engagement, *demonstrated as the ability to:*

- Lead from a place of commitment to the school leader’s role in implementing a vision and expectations for students and other stakeholders, and an understanding of the importance and the means for engaging all stakeholders in support of the school’s work with students.
- Communicate consistently the system’s values, beliefs and priorities.
- Gather input from a broad range of stakeholders to inform personal practice and recommendations for changes in team goals and priorities.
- Provide leadership to the network in a way that fosters a trusting, reciprocal relationship with principals, direct reports, and other stakeholders.
- Use a broad range of communication skills to build and reinforce relationships. Communicate effectively with all stakeholders within the network, employing strong listening, speaking, and writing skills.

Opportunities for Preparation in the Principal Supervisor Pipeline		Areas for Support: Principal Supervisor Onboarding and 1 st Year Support
In-Role Preparation as a Principal	Other Developmental Opportunities from the District	
<p>Future principal supervisors in the principalship should have the ability to hone their skills by practicing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing a school-wide vision and culture that is owned collectively and values the contributions of all stakeholders (students, parents and family members, faculty and staff, as well as other community members and resources). • Communicating with—and building relationships with—a diverse set of school stakeholders, utilizing a wide range of listening, writing and speaking skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak on behalf of the district at community events or at conferences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New principal supervisors benefit from ongoing support in building their communication and stakeholder-engagement skills.

6. Problem-Solving, demonstrated as the ability to:

- Creatively identify and match system resources—time, talent, and funds—to specific school needs and priorities.
- Apply skills in collective problem-solving and demonstrate success in building a shared understanding of a challenge and enlisting input and buy-in for addressing the problem.
- Ensure problem-solving is focused on transformational change, impacting actions, outcomes and beliefs in support of meaningful change.

Opportunities for Preparation in the Principal Supervisor Pipeline		Areas for Support: Principal Supervisor Onboarding and 1 st Year Support
In- Role Preparation as a Principal	Other Developmental Opportunities from the District	
<p>Future principal supervisors in the principalship should have the ability to hone their skills by practicing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applying problem-solving frameworks to identify and address root causes of challenges. • Building a personal network of problem-solvers and internal district resources on call to address school priorities. • Creatively and flexibly applying internal and—where available—external resources of time, talent, and funds. • Building a culture of problem-solving, initiative, and creative resource use within the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve on a district task force or committee focused on a specific system-wide challenge and applying a rigorous process of problem-solving and action. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New principal supervisors benefit from training and practice in applying a district-wide lens to accessing resources for principals and schools in their network. • Another area of support and exploration for new principal supervisors is in creative school design and school staffing to match specific school needs and priorities.

7. Systemic thinking, demonstrated as the ability to:

- Advocate within the central office for needed policy decisions and resources and at the same time represent district-wide strategy and initiatives within their network.
- Represent district-wide strategy and initiatives within their network.
- Apply principles of system design to create sustainable and equitable solutions.

Opportunities for Preparation in the Principal Supervisor Pipeline		Areas for Support: Principal Supervisor Onboarding and 1 st Year Support
In- Role Preparation as a Principal	Other Developmental Opportunities from the District	
<p>Future principal supervisors in the principalship should have the ability to hone their skills by practicing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible application of district-wide policy, processes, frameworks and resources to meet school-specific context and needs. • Taking leadership actions based on an awareness of complex and interdependent consequences. • Successfully building equitable policies and systems and in balancing competing interests and priorities at the school level. • Taking school-based leadership actions based on a commitment to advancing district-wide goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in district-level policy setting and have exposure to considerations and circumstances across the district. • Serve in a role directly related to setting and supporting district goals and policy in the central office as a precursor to the principal supervisor role (such as a year as a “Superintendent Fellow” working with the Superintendent and Chief of Staff on key district issues, or in a similar role on the Academic team). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a domain where new principal supervisors particularly require support, guidance, and opportunities for learning, as they shift their perspective from the school to a network and the district as a whole. Often, principals are successful because they are able to maneuver around limits in the district systems; principal supervisors have an obligation, as district leaders, to address systemic challenges and build equitable, scalable, and sustainable solutions. • New principal supervisors benefit from training in principles of system design to help them apply this lens to their new role. • They also benefit from exposure to senior district leadership and decision-making, learning the considerations, perspectives, and priorities of system leadership.

Dispositions for Leadership as a Principal Supervisor

The vast majority of the prerequisites for success as a principal supervisor can be developed over time through learning, exposure, and applied practice and reflection. As districts make decisions about investing resources—including access to developmental opportunities—to high-potential future principal supervisors, it's important also to note that many of the characteristics that make individuals predisposed to success in a role like this are captured in the principal supervisor dispositions. We recommend that districts look for ways to cultivate and expand these dispositions in high-potential future principal supervisors, but that they also invest pipeline resources in individuals who already demonstrate them in ways appropriate to their current role.

These dispositions include:

1. Belief in student potential

Belief in the potential of all students, demonstrated by a relentless focus on meeting the needs of all students. Commitment to equitable opportunities and outcomes for all students, and a willingness to reinforce this expectation across the network. Commitment to the craft of learning and teaching as the most crucial lever for supporting students in reaching their potential and to establishing school communities that reflect the same.

2. Commitment to continuous improvement and learning

Commitment to building adult professional practice. Personal investment in guiding the success of others and in building collective leadership capacity. A focus on reflection and personal professional growth and development. A personal growth mindset, as well as the ability to identify and cultivate the same in others. A commitment to staying in “coaching” mode with direct reports as often as possible, avoiding telling or directing, so that team members can build their independent leadership skills and own their leadership actions.

3. Resiliency

Commitment to action and individual agency, especially when faced by challenges or complexities. Commitment to personal responsibility and a strong sense of personal efficacy. Grit and tenacity, even when faced with setbacks, mistakes or challenges.

4. Focus on results

Focus on evidence of impact and reaching goals, combined with a tenacious and flexible pursuit of results. Focus on time management and matching effort to the highest-priority actions. A commitment to high expectations and—when they are achieved—to celebration.

5. Problem solving orientation

Commitment to problem-solving with a focus on root causes and flexible, sustainable solutions. Creativity in understanding issues, engaging stakeholders in determining solutions, and applying resources for results.

6. Commitment to stakeholder engagement

Commitment to broad and appropriate stakeholder engagement and a demonstrated respect for all members of a school community. Willingness to work with and through others. Comfort with a facilitative model of leadership.

7. Commitment to systemic solutions

Commitment to systems-building, seeking solutions that are sustainable and institutionalized, with an interest in sustainable change over “quick fixes.” Focus on identifying the implications of leadership actions across a wide range of factors and seeking pathways forward that have equitable outcomes for all stakeholders (all schools, all principals, etc.), rather than serving as work-arounds for specific interests. Awareness of the impact of personal leadership voice within a complex organization.

Once in the principal supervisor pipeline, high-potential future leaders can cultivate these dispositions through the learning experiences above, even as they focus on their skills and expertise, by focusing on reflective practice around their leadership growth. For example, principals honing their leadership skills and experience can simultaneously focus on reflective practices and building a “tool-kit” of personal strategies to renew practice and maintain perspective and personal professional equilibrium.