

TO: Julie Orange, RTTT Project Manager, Florida Department of Education

FROM: Raymond L. Smith, Ph.D., Senior Professional Development Associate with the Leadership and Learning Center

DATE: July 25, 2011

SUBJECT: Review of draft Florida Principal Leadership Standards

Julie, you have asked The Leadership and Learning Center to review the Teacher Leader Performance Implementation Committee's (TLPIC) June 29, 2011 draft of the revised Florida Principal Leadership Standards (FPLS). Specifically, you have asked us to analyze the draft standards against four outside organization's standards i.e., The Reeves' Multidimensional Leadership Performance Assessment (MLPA), which is the Florida Department of Education's statewide model, The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards—National Board Certification for Principals Standards, Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards, and the New Leaders for New Schools (NLNS) Standards, and provide suggestions for your committee's collective consideration as you work to finalize the FPLSs.

The rationale for our ratings of the draft standards on the attached Crosswalk is first organized according to the committee's seven standards. Next, we identify any qualities that appear to be over emphasized within the revised standards as well as describe those research-based leadership qualities that are currently not addressed within the committee's revised FPLS standards.

Our feedback regarding each of the TLPICs seven standards, concepts that may be overly emphasized within the document, and concepts that may have been inadvertently left out of the document is as follows:

Standard #1: Instructional Leadership and Accountability—There are three functions of highly effective leaders that appear to be absent from the TLPICs description of effective leadership practices within this standard. Therefore, the committee might want to reconsider including the following thoughts within the description of effective instructional leadership and accountability practices or in other related standard descriptions (e.g., Systems Leadership).

The first suggestion centers on the expectation that a major part of instructional leadership is connecting the actions of leaders, as well as everyone else in the organization, to an improvement plan of action. That is, leaders must be orchestrating the work of the organization from a set of clearly identified goals, linked to district targets, and measurable adult strategies that reflect a clear

relationship between the actions of teachers and leaders aligned to the improvement plan and the impact on student achievement.

Next, effective leaders not only “monitor the implementation of high quality, differentiated instruction,” but more importantly they use the results from monitoring to adapt organizational systems and processes to ensure they are effective; they are having a positive impact on student results.

Last, while you reference that effective leaders evaluate and “provides constructive feedback and support to optimize teacher performance and student learning” it would be important to add the phrase “formative” to the description. This is a particularly important addition as leaders must give candid feedback to teachers and to other administrators not with the view of providing a summative evaluation that leads to contention, but rather with the view that formative assessment leads to improved performance.

Standard #2: Systems Leadership—The description of this standard is vague. For example, the phrase “The effective leader draws upon...all systems within the organization...” is confusing. What exactly is the leader doing when they “draw upon” organizational systems? Are they simply using the existing systems or are they leading the design, development, and implementation strategic management systems? Does the phrase mean that effective leaders are leading the monitoring and adapting the organizational systems and processes to ensure that the organization is clearly focused on teaching and learning? The committee should address these questions as they look to clarify this standard. Clearly, systems leadership is an important leadership function however your description and illustrative examples leave the reader wondering exactly what systems practices the effective leader is to demonstrate for which they are being held accountable.

Additionally, inasmuch as “creating a safe, inclusive, and equitable learning environment” is important, another important leadership quality is making certain that leaders are protecting instructional time. Consequently, you may want to include within your “effective leader” illustrative examples a statement about effective leaders maximizing the time spent on quality instruction and student learning.

Standard #3: Decision Making—Generally this standard and its description align with the standards and leadership expectations described within the four comparative organizations. However, several of the illustrative statements describing what effective leaders do appear to be incomplete or have essential components missing. For example, the first bulleted statement, “Places top priority on teaching and learning” seems to be incomplete. The committee has

already made it clear in Standard #1 that the leader's primary focus is on teaching and learning. Perhaps the difference here is that the effective leader links decision-making to the vision, mission, and strategic priorities reflected in the school/district improvement plan (e.g., teaching and learning). If that is indeed the case, you should complete the statement with more detailed clarifying language.

Additionally, there are two missing leadership practices you might want to consider adding within your illustrative examples of effective leadership. First, effective leaders establish and operate within a clearly developed and well-communicated decision-making structure so that all educators within the organization understand which decisions will be made by the leader, which decisions will be made by the leader after consultation with other members of the organization, and which decisions will be made by consensus or by the staff independently. Next, making certain that decisions are linked back to the purpose of the organization and having a structure for making decisions are critical features of this standard but by themselves they are insufficient. Effective leaders must also routinely engage in a process of evaluating the decisions made for effectiveness and, when necessary, revise them based on the facts.

Standard #4: Communication and Collaboration—This standard, its corresponding description, and illustrative “effective leader” examples by and large are supported in the research and within the Crosswalk of the four comparative organization's standards.

Standard #5: Human Resource Development—While the title of this standard and its accompanying description on the surface appear compatible with the four comparative organization's leadership standards, the illustrative leadership examples fall short of its full description. For example, you indicate that the effective principal “develops, promotes, and actively participates in job-embedded” professional development however the statement doesn't identify the fact that research supports principals who, when appropriate, personally lead professional development.

Next, this standard and its illustrative examples of leadership practices offer only slight reference to the important practice of “identifying and cultivating” emerging leaders within the organization. Given the state's determination that this leadership practice be weighted at higher levels than other domains, it suggests to us that the committee may want to pull this practice out and have it be a stand-alone standard (e.g., Leadership Development) rather than embedding the practice in Standard #5 as an example of Human Resource Development. Last, none of the illustrative leadership practices the committee has identified that further elaborate on what effective leaders do talk about leaders who are

responsible for designing, implementing, and continuously improving a system for recruiting, hiring, and retaining effective and highly effective teachers. Therefore, we would urge you to consider adding an illustrative statement to your bulleted list that addresses this most important matter.

Standard #6: Professional and Personal Ethical Behaviors—To maintain a parallel structure to your proposed leadership standards, this standard, like the others, should contain illustrative examples of effective leadership practices nested beneath the standard and its general description.

Standard #7: Diversity—This standard, its corresponding description, and illustrative “effective leader” examples by and large are supported within the Crosswalk for two of the four comparative organization’s standards (i.e., NBPTS and ISLLC). Although contemporary research on educational leadership addresses such leadership practices as ensuring an orderly and supportive school environment, establishing good lines of communication both to and from parents and community, and increasing parental involvement and support to create a culture of shared leadership and responsibility—not merely among school staff members, but collectively within the wider community, the research doesn’t specifically address leadership practices that are associated with the issue of diversity.

Overly Emphasized Areas of Leadership Performance within the Draft—The issue of diversity is perhaps the single issue that appears to be over emphasized within the FPLSs draft. That is, the subject of diversity (looking for such terms as diverse, diversity, and equity within the document) appears in four of the seven standards (i.e., Standard #2, #5, #6, and #7). Given the obvious importance of this subject, the committee may want to follow ISLLCs lead as they isolate the subject to two of the six ISLLC Standards (Standard 4—collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs and mobilizing community resources and a sub-component of Standard 5—safeguarding the values of democracy, equity, and diversity) or the National Board Certification for Principals Standards that limit the topic of diversity to one of their nine standards, Standard 5 Culture—principals “honor the culture of the students, adults, and larger community, demonstrating respect for diversity and ensuring equity.”

Areas of Leadership Performance that are Silent within the Draft—There are two leadership practices that are both reflected in contemporary research on leadership as well as in a majority of the comparative organizations’ standards used for the Crosswalk, which are not reflected in the TLPICs current draft—resiliency and personal, professional learning.

Resilience is a critical leadership quality, which is one of the reasons why Dr. Reeves not only includes it within his Multidimensional Leadership Performance Assessment but it is the first leadership standard. Resilience is the ability for the leader to overcome setbacks and absorb any learning offered by those setbacks, quickly, and at the minimum cost. Resilience includes coping well with high levels of ongoing disruptive change, sustaining energy when under constant pressure, bouncing back easily from disappointment and setbacks, overcoming adversity, changing ways of working to incorporate learning when old ways are no longer possible, and doing all of this without acting in dysfunctional or harmful ways to others within the organization. More importantly, when leaders are practicing resilient behaviors their actions are contagious as they model the way for others to act in similar ways.

The leadership practices associated with **personal and professional learning** are some of the most important practices in which effective leaders engage. Just as resilience constitutes contagious emotions on the part of leaders, the best leaders are also the best learners, which is also contagious. One of the most important jobs that leaders do is not the things they say but rather what they do. If we expect to have a learning environment, then we must have leaders who will be first out of the shoot, commit to being a life-long learner, and model the way for others within the organization.

Summary—Per your request, The Leadership and Learning Center has reviewed the TLPIC June 29, 2011 draft of the Florida Principal Leadership Standards. We have offered our opinions on each of the seven standards and how these standards align with contemporary research and the fit of these standards when compared to the standards contained within the four comparative organizations. Furthermore, we have identified one area that may be over emphasized within the draft and offered suggestions as to how the committee might want to address this matter as well as identified two leadership practices that are tied to the research and well supported in the comparative organization's standards but are not reflected in the current draft, which the committee should give strong consideration to as they look to revise their first working document.

Should you wish to talk with us further about our review, we would be most willing to engage you in that conversation as we are in deepest agreement with the aims and work of your committee, which has brought us together.