National **Charter School**
Resource Center

Evaluating Charter School Principals

Tips & Tools

Evaluating Charter School Principals

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SCENARIO

Veronica Felicien is a leader of a charter management organization (CMO), a nonprofit organization with a shared vision and mission of improving student achievement and meeting the unique needs of its culturally and ethnically diverse student and community populations. The CMO and its four respective charter schools (two elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school) serve more than 2,000 students and are situated in a suburban school district that has its own four elementary schools, three middle schools, and two traditional high schools. The CMO and the charter schools serve primarily African-American, Latino, and Asian students from a high-poverty area that is less than 25 miles away from a large urban school district in the South.

In the last year, the CMO committee has hired two new principals. These new principals are often referred to among the CMO committee members as "young, ambitious, Generation Y risk takers" because they range in age between 29 and 35 and not only are technology savvy and highly educated but also are forward thinking and committed to working collaboratively with their staff, parents, and students to improve student learning (see Coggshall, Behrstock-Sherratt, & Drill, 2011). Both of these beginner principals have just completed their first year as a school administrator. In comparison, the other two more veteran charter school principals have been at their schools an average of eight years.

The current principal evaluation process employed by the CMO consists of one yearly review that is done primarily for compliance purposes. It entails one or two drop-in or unannounced observations conducted by untrained members of the CMO committee that last for 30 minutes each. In her role as a leader of the CMO, Felicien serves as a member of this committee. After the observations, both parties sign a document stating that the principal observation has occurred. The principals often receive feedback that primarily highlights their strengths, but they receive few comments or suggestions for areas of improvement. Moreover, principals are rarely asked to review school data and discuss their efforts or ideas for improving student achievement, nor are they asked to take the time to reflect on their performance.

Despite this dilemma of not having a rigorous evaluation system in place, two schools have exceeded their adequate yearly progress (AYP) goals. Because of this success, two of the principals believe that there is no need to "rock the boat" when it comes to changing their leadership practices in order to keep their schools on track with meeting local and statewide achievement goals, despite evidence that small subsets of their student populations (e.g., homeless or transient students and the Vietnamese and Spanish-speaking English language learners) have made only modest gains. Moreover, with the exception of one charter school principal, the other administrators have not bought into the CMO's desire to revamp their less-than-formal evaluation practices in such a way that would force them to keep abreast of any new leadership practices. Currently, everything seems to be working, even though the committee members realize that most principals under their purview are uncomfortable or reluctant to ask for help in pinpointing areas of improvement regarding the changing landscape of their schools and surrounding community.

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With all of the other pressing issues on her daily agenda, Felicien half-heartedly tells herself, "Don't fix it if it's not broken." However, after taking the time to attend several conferences and visiting with other charter school principals across the state who have opted to be evaluated using more rigorous, diverse, and valid evaluations, Felicien now believes that their principals need to change in order to get the most from their staff and students. During her quest to learn more about various principal evaluation systems, Felicien learned that there is a need to go beyond checklist evaluations and the use of intermittent (and often subjective) walk-throughs. Evaluators also need to be trained on the use and importance of the evaluation tools and process. More important, Felicien also learned the value of using valid and reliable tools (e.g., four-point scaled rubrics); incorporating multiple sources of data (e.g., student dropout data, teacher retention data, school safety records, master school schedules, documentation of planning time for teachers, parent and teacher surveys, and longitudinal student achievement data); expanding the list of competencies and areas on which administrators are evaluated; and most important, communicating to the principals that the evaluation is a collaborative process. Utilizing a more rigorous principal evaluation will help the CMO and its principals identify their assets and limitations; this approach also will help the CMO target appropriate professional development for its principals to ensure that student performance remains high as well as find ways to further challenge all of the charter school students both in and out of the classroom.

Felicien has established a five-person committee to begin the initial revamping of the CMO committee's evaluation process. However, before beginning, the committee must first consider these initial questions:

- How can the CMO committee continue to respect the autonomy of each charter school but work toward implementation of high-quality models of principal performance assessment to ensure that its principals are able to evolve with their ever-changing school landscapes?

- What should the CMO committee know first before attempting to implement a more rigorous evaluation system?

BENEFITS OF EVALUATING PRINCIPALS

With the need to meet a set of higher accountability standards—such as the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Educational Leadership Policy Standards (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008) and the AYP benchmarks of the current reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, for example—charter school principals are faced with the knowledge that they play a vital role in school effectiveness (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). In addition, these principals are charged with improving teacher retention, increasing parent participation, improving student behavior, and improving student learning and achievement. As a result, principals need to find ways to continually stay abreast of the best strategies for tackling day-to-day and long-term school issues such as acquiring and allocating resources, maintaining a clearly articulated vision that is focused on student learning, establishing trust and open lines of communication among faculty and staff, and, perhaps most important, providing instructional leadership.

Areas of improvement for individual administrators can be identified through the use of formative and summative assessments. Such assessments for administrators serve a multitude of purposes. These assessments should be used by any organization charged with managing charter schools (e.g., charter management organizations [CMOs], education management organizations [EMOs], or governing boards) to evaluate and assess potential areas for improvement for individual charter school principals in order to target professional development needs, and they should be as adaptable enough to take into account a principal's workplace contexts (e.g., urbanicity or poverty level).

There is a distinction between the purposes of formative and summative assessments. To clarify, the intention behind formative assessment is to assess competency in an area that will be used to "inform [a principal's] future actions … [such as] a principal's professional development plan" (Condon & Clifford, 2010, p. 1). In contrast, the function behind summative assessment is to "inform a decision about … competence, [but] there is no opportunity for remediation or development after completion" (Condon & Clifford, 2010, p. 1). One of the benefits of using formative assessment is that it allows the person being evaluated to get immediate feedback on areas of strength and weakness during the evaluation process, which provides an opportunity to make midcourse changes to practices if necessary. Formative assessment often is given before summative assessment. In contrast, summative assessment is completed primarily at the end of a specific time period (e.g., end of semester or end of year) and allows the evaluator to judge the evidence collected to determine evidence of competence, areas of improvement, and areas in need of improvement. Unfortunately, the person being evaluated can make changes in practice only for the following year, not the current year.

Both the formative and summative assessment processes can take the form of infrequent or informal evaluations as well as more formal evaluations. However, the purposes for which the results of the data are used determine if an assessment is considered formative or summative (Chappuis & Chappuis, 2007). Examples of more formal types of evaluation include development of portfolios; collections of evidenced-based, data-driven materials; and use of validated rubrics. Informal forms of assessments can consist of drop-in observations and surveys or interviews of potential stakeholders (e.g., teachers, students, parents).

To be truly informative, both formative and summative assessments should align closely with the ISLLC or other standards (for example, the National Educational Technology Standards for Administrators [International Society for Technology in Education, 2009]) and be conducted at minimum on an annual basis. Examples of other benefits that may result from using formative and summative assessments for principals include the following:

- **Increased accountability of principals.** Some assessments are comprehensive or use a 360-degree feedback approach, for example. In such assessments, data are collected from interviews or surveys with teachers, parents, or students in conjunction with other data collection activities, such as formal observations and reviews of key documents. If the 360-degree feedback approach is used, principals are able to receive a more complete picture of the performance of their administration and how those at the school are impacted. The 360-degree feedback approach compels principals to maintain a level of accountability to their stakeholders.

- **Assessment of good instructional leadership practices and behavior.** Assessments should serve to assess the specific behaviors and actions of a principal rather than just his or her personality traits. By focusing on behaviors associated with better learning environments, districts will be better able to identify and determine the association or link between leadership behaviors and improved teacher and/or student outcomes. For instance, according to The Wallace Foundation (2009), a "well-designed assessment process could be a powerful and constructive way to identify leaders' strengths and weaknesses and encourage them to focus on the actions most likely to bring about better teaching and learning" (p. 1).

- **Provision of data that can be used to target support and professional development.** Findings collected after both the formative and summative assessments should be tied to or inform the principal's professional development plans, training, and goals. For example, if an assessment shows that a particular area of weakness consists of the infrequent use or analysis of student achievement data to inform school policy, the evaluation team members should work together to identify a range of individualized (or group) support that can be provided through coaching or mentoring, peer groups or cohorts, or targeted training workshops focused on a specific skill or content (NewSchools Venture Fund, 2008).

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Although charter school principals hold a great deal of autonomy in their day-to-day decisions in running their schools, including participating in a formal evaluation system, following are important points that both the building-level principals and the management organization or governing board should remember before embarking on the use of formative and summative assessments to improve leadership practices:

- **Assessments should have explicit criteria for evaluation.** The criteria for which an administrator is evaluated should be "understandable and clearly stated, and should be based on measurable and observable metrics rather than on subjective measures in order to ensure fairness" (NewSchools Venture Fund, 2008, p. 16). Moreover, feedback from the evaluator should be open and timely in order to give principals an opportunity to review the findings and, if necessary, make changes or improvements.

- **Assessments should be adaptable to the principal's position or level of experience within his or her career continuum.** The needs of a beginning administrator are different from those of a veteran administrator (Braun & Carlson, 2008; Fleck, 2008). As a result, assessments should be flexible to meet the needs of each type of administrator (New Leaders for New Schools, 2010).

- **The content of the assessment should align with the goals or needs of the charter school.** Of the available assessment instruments that governing boards or management organizations use to evaluate their charter school principals, many have been found to vary in the topics and characteristics assessed as well as the methods used and level of specificity required (Murphy, Goldring, Cravens, Elliott, & Porter, 2007; Goldring et al., 2009). For example, if charters schools are struggling to meet their AYP goals, members of the management organization or governing board should consider selecting a type of assessment that will focus on or allow them to assess principals in this area.

- **Assessments should be valid and reliable.** Using assessment instruments that are both rigorously and psychometrically validated impacts not only the validity and reliability of the assessments and data collected but also the legitimacy and replicability of the findings (Condon & Clifford, 2010).

- **Assessments should take into account the context of the charter school.** The school context affects requirements and practices of the principal. For example, is the principal dealing with the frequent challenge of poor parental involvement or primarily concerned about increasing student test scores? The type of assessment used will help to provide insight as to why administrators may assign different levels of priority to different school concerns, which, in turn, may affect their leadership style or approach (The Wallace Foundation, 2009).

- **The effectiveness of the evaluation system also should be evaluated.** To ensure that assessments are valid and implemented with fidelity, boards and management organizations should reevaluate the effectiveness of their assessment instruments and overall process. According to a report by The Wallace Foundation (2009), most principal performance assessments did not occur on an annual basis until 2000. Moreover, the report's authors found variation in the frequency with which most principal assessments occurred within schools in a particular district and that assessments often were not based

on a set of specific standards. Evaluators and principals should know that improvement is a continuous and ongoing process. Moreover, management organizations also should be willing to revise and reevaluate the design and implementation process for their evaluation system every few years based on lessons learned as well as results and/or data collected from the field (New Leaders for New Schools, 2010).

- **Principal assessments should connect to teacher- and student-level outcomes.** Current research indicates that the school principal is second only to the classroom teacher as the most important person to impact student learning and achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood et al., 2004). Creating an environment that is conducive to both teacher improvement and student achievement is the key goal for most school administrators and charter school boards or management organizations. It makes sense, therefore, to include a way to capture or a measure one or more quality indicators within an assessment—for example, through a survey—of how well (or not) a principal is able to achieve this goal and his or her impact on outcomes related to teacher and student growth as a component of the evaluation system.

Finally, when selecting an assessment, charter school boards or management organizations should consider the time needed to administer the instrument, the costs, and the ease of use or implementation.

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING PRINCIPAL EVALUATION PROCESSES

1. Establish a clear set of expectations and goals for the assessments.

    a. Establish *what* will be assessed.

    b. Establish *who* will help provide feedback.

    c. Establish *how* the findings of the assessments or evaluations will be used.

    d. Establish the *frequency* with which assessments will occur.

2. Use assessments that are valid and reliable and that help inform principal professional development needs.

3. Link assessments to research-based standards.

4. Use multiple forms of assessment, and vary the types of data collected to obtain a holistic view of principal performance.

The following section describes the strategies in more detail and indicates resources that provide helpful information about implementing the strategies listed. Some resources highlight the rationale for a strategy or the research base that supports it; other resources provide examples of how the strategy has been implemented or practical toolkits that can assist school leaders in adopting these strategies.

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STRATEGY 1:
Establish a Clear Set of Expectations and Goals for the Assessments

Having clear expectations about the goals and purposes of the principal evaluation system is vital. Explicit and easy-to-understand goals and expectations about the assessment tools and/or process will allow for buy-in from the school administrator(s) and a transparent picture of how principal performance will be assessed as well as the types of data that will be analyzed. Moreover, the findings gleaned from this process can be used to paint a more complete picture of the principal's leadership practices, skills, and weaknesses as well as identify ways to help advance overall school improvement.

Resource 1: Purpose of Leadership Assessment in the Field of Education

Portin, B., Feldman, S., & Knapp, M. (2006). *Purposes, uses, and practices of leadership assessment in education.* Seattle, WA: Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy. Retrieved October 14, 2011, from http://depts.washington.edu/ctpmail/PDFs/LAssess-Oct25.pdf

This report is one in a series of reports commissioned by The Wallace Foundation and developed by the University of Washington's Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy. Analyzing the latest research and using several scenarios on the assessment of leadership performance through the lens of learning-focused leadership, the report highlights the various objectives and uses of leadership assessments within local, state, and national settings.

Resource 2: New York's Principal Evaluation System Implementation

New York State Education Department. (2010). *Guidance on New York state's annual performance review law and regulations.* Albany, NY: Author. Retrieved October 14, 2011, from http://usny.nysed.gov/rttt/teachers-leaders/fieldguidance.pdf

Passed in spring 2011 by the New York State Legislature in response to receiving federal Race to the Top funding, the Education Law 3012-C, now mandates local education agencies throughout the state of New York to begin implementing its new teacher and principal evaluation system. Although not legally required to implement the new law, public charter schools in the state that opt to participate or that have received Race to the Top funding will be required to evaluate school principals (and also classroom teachers) using a "comprehensive annual evaluation system" (p. 47). Specifically, charter schools that decide to participate in the new evaluation system will be required to ensure that the evaluation does the following:

- Is based on multiple measures of principal effectiveness, including 40 percent student achievement measures, which would result in a single composite effectiveness score for every principal (and teacher).
- Differentiates effectiveness for principals (and teachers) using a four-point rating scale of *highly effective, effective, developing,* and *ineffective*.
- Provides for the development and implementation of improvement plans for principals (and teachers) rated *developing* or *ineffective*.

Resource 3: South Carolina's Principal Performance Procedures/Assurance Form

South Carolina Department of Education. (n.d.). *Program for assisting, developing, and evaluating principal performance: Procedures/assurance form.* Columbia, SC: Author. Retrieved October 14, 2011, from http://www.scteachers.org/leadership/docs/AnnualAssuranceForms1&2.pdf

This procedures and assurance form developed by the South Carolina Department of Education outlines the important activities and steps that both the evaluator and the principal must complete prior to and after the start of the principal assessment.

Resource 4: Principal Professional Growth Plan

Achievement First. (n.d.). *Professional growth plan: School principal.* New Haven, CT: Author. Retrieved October 14, 2011, from http://www.newschools.org/files/Principal-12.doc

Achievement First is a network of 19 public charter schools located in the northeastern United States (e.g., Connecticut and New York) that serves 5,500 students in Grades K–12 as of 2010–11 school year. To help keep administrators accountable, Achievement First has created professional growth plans for principals and teachers. The plan for principals identifies a series of leadership "outputs" that principals are responsible for demonstrating as school leaders. Principals are assessed on categories such as "leadership of people," which includes specific measures such as "hiring and retaining great teachers" and "staff morale and attendance." The plans go further to indicate the type of data—teacher survey, observation, retention rates, or others—that should be collected and analyzed for each measure.

SUBSTRATEGY 1.1:
Establish What Will Be Assessed

Knowing what will be assessed during an evaluation—communication, collaboration, organization, planning, ability to problem-solve, fiscal management, technology management, or some other area—will help increase the transparency and clarity for charter school principals and increase the odds of capturing elements or examples of good leadership practices, as indicated by a variety of professional standards (see Strategy 3 on p. 15).

Resource 5: Leadership Performance Planning Worksheet (Overview and Excerpt)

NYC Leadership Academy Inc. (2010). *Leadership performance planning worksheet* [Website]. Retrieved October 14, 2011, from http://www.nycleadershipacademy.org/knowledge/LPPW. Excerpt retrieved October 14, 2011, from http://www.nycleadershipacademy.org/files/imce_uploads/LPPW_Sample_-_Attachment_B.pdf

In collaboration with The Wallace Foundation and state departments of education in three states (Delaware, Kentucky, and Missouri), the NYC Leadership Academy developed the Leadership Performance Planning Worksheet, which is based on 40 leadership behaviors that impact learning and instruction. Each core leadership behavior is organized around nine school leadership

dimensions. Examples of the types of leadership dimensions from which school principals are assessed include the following: "plans and sets goals for student performance"; "recruits and retains qualified staff"; "ensures continual improvement for students, teachers, and the organization"; and "reports student achievement results transparently" (p. 6).

Resource 6: What Are Principals Expected to Do?

Catano, N., & Stronge, J. H. (2006). What are principals expected to do? Congruence between principal evaluation and performance standards. *NASSP Bulletin, 90*(3), 221–237. Abstract retrieved October 14, 2011, from http://bul.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/90/3/221

In their content analysis of principal evaluation instruments as well as state and professional standards set for principals in several school districts, the authors found that principals are primarily assessed in the following areas: instructional leadership, organizational management, and community relations. Findings also reveal that the instruments being used reflect state and professional standards.

Resource 7: Assessing School Leaders' Effectiveness

The Wallace Foundation. (2009). *Assessing the effectiveness of school leaders: New directions and new processes.* New York: Author. Retrieved October 14, 2011, from http://www.wallacefoundation. org/KnowledgeCenter/KnowledgeTopics/CurrentAreasofFocus/EducationLeadership/Documents/ Assessing-the-Effectiveness-of-School-Leaders.pdf

In this report, researchers at The Wallace Foundation examine and discuss the aspects of principal leadership that should be assessed and how they should be assessed, as well as the limitations of current assessments. The report identifies six areas in which assessments can be improved and discusses three newly developed assessment instruments.

Resource 8: Principals Technology Leadership Assessment

UCEA Center for the Advanced Study of Technology Leadership in Education. (2010). *Principals technology leadership assessment.* Minneapolis, MN: Author. Retrieved October 14, 2011, from http://schooltechleadership.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/ptla_info_packet.pdf

Funded through the U.S. Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) Center for the Advanced Study of Technology Leadership in Education (CASTLE) administers the Principals Technology Leadership Assessment (PTLA), which consists of an online survey that is designed to "assess principals' technology leadership inclinations and activities over the course of the last year" (p. 1). The PTLA was created and validated by American Institutes for Research and is aligned to the National Educational Technology Standards for Administrators (International Society for Technology in Education, 2009).

SUBSTRATEGY 1.2:
Establish Who Will Help Provide Feedback

It is important to receive multirater feedback from various stakeholder groups (e.g., teachers, staff, students, and/or parents) to ascertain the principal's performance as a school leader. Using multiple measures increases the likelihood of obtaining a 360-degree picture about potential areas for school improvement (e.g., a principal's effort to address building maintenance issues) that may not necessarily be covered in a single type of assessment instrument (e.g., observation protocol). Moreover, using multiple sources of data also provides additional context and perspectives surrounding the school learning environment from those directly impacted by it.

Resource 9: Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (VAL-ED)

Vanderbilt University, Peabody College. (2008). *About the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (VAL-ED): Theory* [Website]. Retrieved October 14, 2011, from http://www.valed.com/theory.html

The Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (VAL-ED) is an online and paper-and-pencil assessment that "utilizes a multi-rater, evidence-based approach to measure the effectiveness of school leadership behaviors known to influence teacher performance and student learning." VAL-ED is designed to be completed by the principal, teachers, and the person or organization to which the principal reports (e.g., charter school board or management organization). The instrument is currently aligned with the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) 2008 Educational Leadership Policy Standards. The development of VAL-ED was funded through The Wallace Foundation.

Resource 10: North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey

North Carolina State Board of Education. (2002). *North Carolina's teacher working conditions initiative: Frequently asked questions* [Website]. Retrieved October 14, 2011, from http://ncteachingconditions.org/faq/

Since 2002, the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions survey has been administered annually to both principals and teachers throughout the state. Principals are asked a series of questions about the teacher working conditions at their respective schools and their own personal working conditions at the district level. Data from both the principal and teacher components of the survey can be used as evidence in principal evaluation or as a means of principals' self-reflection on their school leadership as well as a way to gauge progress or improvement. For example, principals can use results from the survey to help refocus on areas in need of improvement and use the feedback from the survey to set personal or school goals such as improving parent and community involvement or communication with staff. The Teacher Working Conditions survey has been expanded beyond North Carolina and is now administered in 10 other states, including Alabama, Colorado, Maine, and Maryland.

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SUBSTRATEGY 1.3:
Establish How the Findings of the Assessments or Evaluations Will Be Used

Assessment instruments should be valid and reliable. Furthermore, they should provide data to inform how identified weaknesses can be addressed through professional development or other support. For example, Goldring et al. (2008) found in their review of current principal assessment instruments that almost half of all assessments failed to provide principals with clear feedback that was linked to a development plan on what they could be doing better to improve learning and teaching.

Resource 11: St. Louis Summer Leadership Academy

Smith-Anderson, S. (2009). *Summer leadership academy 2009–2010* [Slide presentation]. St. Louis, MO: St. Louis Public Schools, Office of Leadership Development. Retrieved October 14, 2011, from http://www.slps.org/19621051994153557/lib/ 19621051994153557/2009/oct_2009/SLA%20Results%20to%20the%20Board.ppt

The summer leadership academy hosted by St. Louis Public Schools is designed to train school principals for the purpose of promoting school improvement and improving student achievement. The leadership academy is broken into four subacademies: Principals in Action, Autonomy Principal, Executive Coach, and Phoenix. Within each of these smaller academies, principals identify and reflect on specific measurable outcomes. For example, in the Autonomy Principal Academy, principals reflect on their staffing, budget, curriculum, and governance and identify specific, measurable outcomes and a process to obtain those outcomes.

Resource 12: Leading Change Handbook

Spiro, J. (2009). *Leading change handbook: Concepts and tools.* New York: The Wallace Foundation. Retrieved October 14, 2011, from http://www.wallacefoundation.org/KnowledgeCenter/ KnowledgeTopics/CurrentAreasofFocus/EducationLeadership/Documents/leading-change-handbook.pdf

This handbook, designed specifically for school principals, provides assistance in their efforts to implement change within their schools and within themselves. It offers administrators a series of tools and action steps to assist them along their journey of change. The author calls the handbook a toolkit that offers steps for "assessing and improving participants' readiness; engaging stakeholders; planning 'early wins'; minimizing resistance; using collaborative planning methods; and developing ways to bring initiatives to scale and sustain them over time" (p. 1).

SUBSTRATEGY 1.4:
Establish the Frequency With Which the Assessments Will Occur

Most school administrators are evaluated on an annual basis in congruence with their contract or as mandated by their state (Portin, Feldman, & Knapp, 2006). Some researchers argue that one assessment a year is not enough to accurately evaluate a school principal. As a result, some states have begun to revise their evaluation policy timelines to increase the frequency of evaluations from yearly to each semester to quarterly, as well as prior to and after the academic school year.

Resource 13: Ohio School Administrator Performance Review Policy

Ohio Legislative Service Commission. (n.d.). *Bill analysis: Am. Sub. S.B. 77. 123rd General Assembly.* Columbus, OH: Author. Retrieved October 14, 2011, from http://www.lsc.state.oh.us/analyses/s0077-ps.pdf

When Senate Bill 77 was passed in Ohio, it strengthened the requirements and guidelines used to evaluate administrators in the state. For example, under the current law, school administrators must be evaluated annually by the superintendent. The law expands and clarifies the requirements related to the frequency of evaluations that must occur in years when the administrator's contract is up for renewal versus when it is not. In years when a contract is not up for renewal, principals are to be evaluated yearly as required by law. However, in years when contract renewal is required, the law mandates that school principals are to be evaluated twice during the year. As part of all evaluations, the supervisor must identify and provide written documentation of the "strengths and deficiencies" (p. 3) of the administrator as well as recommendations for improvement.

Resource 14: Systems Approach to Principal Leadership Performance Review

School Administrators of Iowa. (2006). *Principal leadership performance review: A systems approach.* Clive, IA: Author. Retrieved October 14, 2011, from http://www.illinoisschoolleader.org/advisory_committee/documents/PrincipalEvaluationBooklet.pdf

This comprehensive model for principal evaluation was developed by the School Administrators of Iowa in partnership with The Wallace Foundation for school leaders in Iowa after the passage of Senate File 277 in 2007 by the Iowa Legislature. This system of evaluation is aligned with the six Iowa Standards for School Leaders and details how often a principal must be evaluated by providing a suggested timeline. The publication gives a description of each standard and the types of artifacts or documentation that must be collected to show evidence that a principal has (or has not) met a specific standard.

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STRATEGY 2:
Use Assessments That Are Valid and Reliable and That Help Inform Principal Professional Development Needs

Assessment instruments should be valid and reliable. Furthermore, these instruments should provide data to inform how a principal's identified weaknesses can be addressed through professional development or other support. For example, Goldring et al. (2008) found in their review of current principal assessment instruments that almost half of all assessments failed to provide principals with clear feedback that was linked to a development plan on what they could be doing better to improve learning and teaching.

Resource 15: Measuring Principal Performance

Condon, C., & Clifford, M. (2010). *Measuring principal performance: How rigorous are commonly used principal performance assessment instruments?* Naperville, IL: Learning Point Associates. Retrieved October 14, 2011, from http://www.learningpt.org/pdfs/QSLBrief_2%20MeasuringPerf. pdf

The researchers for this brief conducted a scan of assessment instruments used to measure principal performance for the purpose of identifying well-developed, validated, reliable, publicly available instruments, which yielded 20 instruments. When those were reviewed against criteria for rigor, only eight were found to be psychometrically rigorous. These instruments are the VAL-ED (Porter, Murphy, Goldring, & Elliot, 2006), the Change Facilitator Questionnaire (Vandenberghe, 1988), the Diagnostic Assessment of School and Principal Effectiveness (Ebmeier, 1992), the Instructional Activity Questionnaire (Larsen, 1987), the Performance Review Analysis and Improvement System for Education (Knoop & Common, 1985), the Leadership Practices Inventory (Kouzes & Posner, 2002), the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985), and the Principal Profile (Leithwood & Montgomery, 1986). The authors note that only two of the eight instruments were created in the last decade (2002 and 2006); the older measures may not capture the essential features of today's school principal position, which has changed in the past 10 years.

Resource 16: NewSchools Venture Fund's Principal Development: Selection, Support, and Evaluation

NewSchools Venture Fund (2008). *Principal development: Selection, support, & evaluation. Key strategies from NewSchools' portfolio ventures.* San Francisco: Author. Retrieved October 14, 2011, from http://www.newschools.org/files/PrincipalDevelopment.pdf

In this case study, NewSchools Venture Fund highlights best practices relating to principal selection, support, and evaluation, as exhibited by two charter management organizations (Achievement First and Green Dot Public Schools) as well as New Leaders for New Schools, a nonprofit organization charged with attracting, supporting, and preparing school principals. This study provides examples of selection criteria, core competencies, task lists, and evaluation rubrics used by these three organizations to develop their principals.

STRATEGY 3:
Link Assessments to Research-Based Standards

To help determine whether the behaviors exhibited by charter school principals are associated with effective leadership practices, assessment instruments should align with one or more set of professional or state-approved standards. For example, 40 states have adopted the revised Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008) that describe behaviors associated with improved student achievement. Three states in particular—Iowa, Delaware, and Kentucky—have recently started using the ISLLC standards as a benchmark against which to assess administrators (The Wallace Foundation, 2009).

Resource 17: ISLLC Educational Leadership Policy Standards

Council of Chief State School Officers. (2008). *Educational leadership policy standards: ISLLC 2008.* Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved October 14, 2011, from http://www.ccsso.org/ Documents/2008/Educational_Leadership_Policy_Standards_2008.pdf

The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), an association of 24 member states managed by the Council of Chief State School Officers, developed six ISLLC standards in 1994 with the aim of providing a set of universal standards for school leaders and a framework for district administrators to gauge the presence of effective leadership practices that may (or may not) be exhibited by their school principals. The ISLLC standards were revised and updated in 2008.

Resource 18: South Carolina Principal Evaluation Instrument

South Carolina State Department of Education. (n.d.). *Principal evaluation instrument.* Columbia, SC: Author. Retrieved October 14, 2011, from http://www.scteachers.org/leadership/docs/ PrincipalEvaluationInstrument.doc

This principal evaluation instrument is aligned with the standards and criteria set forth by the South Carolina State Board of Education. The state currently requires principals to be evaluated once every three years. This instrument requires the evaluator to rate the principal on each standard against a three-point rating continuum that ranges from *exemplary* to *needs improvement*. Evaluators must provide documentation or evidence for their rating.

Resource 19: Green Dot Public Schools' Principal Evaluation Rubric

Green Dot Public Schools. (2007). *Administrator evaluation form.* Los Angeles: Author. Retrieved October 14, 2011, from http://www.newschools.org/files/Principal-11.doc

As a CMO, Green Dot Public Schools operates 12 charter schools within the Los Angeles Unified School District. Green Dot was one of five organizations in Los Angeles to split a $60 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in 2009. Green Dot principals are evaluated using the six ISLLC standards and against a series of indicators such as the following: "The administrator has established systems and protocols for garnering teacher feedback and input on

professional development, school culture, etc." (p. 11). As part of the evaluation form or rubric, principals are given a score of 1–5 designating areas of challenge against areas of strength as well as next steps for improvement under that specific indicator.

Resource 20: Educational Leadership Improvement Tool

Eugene School District 4J. (2007). *Revision of the educational leadership improvement tool: Determining visionary leadership.* Eugene, OR: Author. Retrieved October 14, 2011, from http://www.4j.lane.edu/instruction/gp/eli/progress_lead12-17-07

The Leadership for Educational Achievement in Districts (LEAD) team of Eugene School District 4J revised the district's educational leadership improvement tool in 2007 in order to better align it with the Oregon State Standards. Administrators are currently evaluated according to the following six standards: Visionary Leadership, Instructional Improvement, Effective Management, Inclusive Practice, Ethical Leadership, and Socio-Political Context.

Resource 21: Connecticut Administrator Technology Standards

Connecticut State Department of Education. (2002). *2001 Connecticut administrator technology standards.* Hartford, CT: Author. Retrieved October 14, 2011, from http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/dtl/technology/catsv2.pdf

In collaboration with the Alliance of Regional Educational Service Centers, the Connecticut State Department of Education developed six administrator technology standards that are designed specifically for superintendents, district program directors, and school principals. The standards are designed to promote "technology literacy" in administrators. For example, in Standard 1, Leadership and Vision, the aim is for "educational leaders [to] inspire a shared vision for comprehensive integration of technology and foster an environment and culture conducive to the realization of that vision" (p. 4). The other five standards are Learning and Teaching; Productivity and Professional Practice; Support, Management, and Operations; Assessment and Evaluation; and Social, Legal, and Ethical Issues.

Resource 22: Evaluation of Principals by States and Urban Districts

Goldring, E. Cravens, X. C., Murphy, J., Elliott, S. N., Carson, B., & Porter, A., C. (2008). *The evaluation of principals: What and how do states and districts assess leadership?* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York, NY. Retrieved October 14, 2011, from http://peabody.vanderbilt.edu/Documents/pdf/LSI/AERA_EvaluationPrincipals.pdf

After completing a content analysis of 65 instruments used by districts and states across the United States to evaluate their school administrators, these researchers presented their findings in a report that reveals that most of the instruments used are not informed by nor aligned with the current research-based criteria associated with effective leadership and school performance. Moreover, the authors note that "in most cases, the practices of leadership assessment lack justification and documentation in terms of the utility, psychometric properties, and accuracy of the instruments" (p. 1).

STRATEGY 4:
Use Multiple Forms of Assessments, and Vary the Types of Data Collected to Obtain a Holistic View of Principal Performance

The process by which a charter school administrator is evaluated should include multiple sources of data and mediums (e.g., incorporation of technology) in order to make certain that a clear picture about the administrator is captured (Alabama Department of Education, 2002). Examples of the types of assessments or information that should be part of the process include portfolios, surveys or interviews of stakeholders, supervisor reviews, school observations, principal self-assessment forms, and online or computer-based assessments.

Resource 23: Reflective Tools for School and District Leaders

Knapp, M. S., Copland, M. A., & Talbert, J. E. (2003). *Leading for learning: Reflective tools for school and district leaders.* Seattle, WA: Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy. Retrieved October 14, 2011, from http://depts.washington.edu/ctpmail/PDFs/LforLSummary-02-03.pdf

In 2003, the Center for the Study of Teaching Policy developed a self-assessment framework geared primarily toward school and district administrators. This framework provides a series of tools that encourage administrators to assess themselves and their schools and encourage them to think about and develop strategies that will impact improvement. The ideas and tools highlighted within the framework—which is not aligned with the ISLLC standards—were reviewed by more than 300 educators, scholars, and other professionals.

Resource 24: Enhancing School Leaders' Reflective Thinking and Decision Making

Claudet, J. (2006). A multimedia approach to enhancing school leaders' reflective thinking and decision making. *Interactive Educational Multimedia, 13,* 1–10. Retrieved October 14, 2011, from http://www.ub.es/multimedia/iem/down/c13/Multimedia_Approach.pdf

This article summarizes the development and use of a unique multimedia, computer-based tool, the Administrator Case Simulation (ACS) Multimedia Library, which is designed to impact "the professional development of school administrative leaders involved in collaborative school leadership" (p. 1). Components of ACS are aligned with the National Policy Board for Educational Administration standards, ISLLC standards, and the Texas Standards for the Principalship. Working in partnership with school districts—in particular, principals, community members, and teachers—the designers developed a series of interactive tools that are specifically designed to "focus on providing an interactive, multimedia learning environment within which users can articulate and examine their own reflective thinking and decision making in response to school leadership dilemma situations" (p. 6). For example, school leaders are given a CD-ROM on which they view real-life video portrayals of issues faced by school leaders under the topics Collaborative Leadership (e.g., consensus building), Equal Access (e.g., student rights), Inclusion (e.g., special education), Resistance to Change (e.g., teacher assessment and development), and Instructional Leadership (e.g., curriculum integration). As part of the next component, the Case

Video Scenes Database, principals can view short scenes involving multiple, and conflicting, stakeholder perspectives on one of the leadership topic areas noted above. A "video-mark" feature allows principals to digitally mark features within the video for further reflective analysis, whereupon they also will be asked to describe how that specific scene or clip aligns to one or more administrative standards.

Resource 25: Robert Treat Academy Charter School: Educator Evaluation

Robert Treat Academy Charter School (2010). *Educator evaluation information, 2009–2010* [Website]. Retrieved October 14, 2011, from http://www.roberttreatacademy.org/page163.html

Robert Treat Academy Charter School, a 2008 No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon School located in New Jersey, provides a description of its principal evaluation system on this website. Tenured charter school leaders are evaluated annually at the end of the year (e.g., summative evaluation) by a committee made up of Board of Trustees members using the New Jersey School Board Association's evaluation rubric. Nontenured charter school leaders are evaluated three times a year. The evaluation process consists of both informal and formal observations, reviews of portfolios and work samples, school climate indicators, principal self-evaluations, and progress toward improving student achievement outcomes. Charter school principals are rated in areas such as general responsibilities, instructional leadership, personnel administration, financial management, chief executive office, and school/community relations. Scores from the evaluation are used to plan professional development needs of the principal, recommendations for continued employment, and tenure and compensation decisions. Evaluation processes are in place for assistant or vice principals as well as teachers.

Tips & Tools

REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE: NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION'S ONLINE PRINCIPAL EVALUATION PROCESS

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), in partnership with Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning, has implemented a statewide and online evaluation system for principals, assistant principals, and teachers. Any schools, including charter schools, that have received federal Race to the Top funding are automatically required to participate. To respect the autonomy of the remaining charter schools, each school can elect to participate in the new evaluation system. Currently, the state has 100 charter schools, of which 33 have applied for and/or received Race to the Top funding (NCDPI, n.d.; NCDPI Office of Charter Schools, n.d.). Between September and October 2010, NCDPI provided training to evaluators in the use of the evaluation tools. Concurrently that same year, the state initiated the North Carolina School Executive Principal and Assistant Principal Evaluation Process, which requires all principals and assistant principals to be evaluated once a year using the North Carolina School Executive Evaluation four-point rubric (e.g., *developing, proficient, accomplished,* and *distinguished*). The specific purpose of the new process is five-fold (NCDPI, 2010, p. 1):

- "To serve as a guide for principals/assistant principals as they reflect upon and improve their effectiveness as school leaders."

- "To inform higher education programs in developing the content and requirements of degree programs that prepare future principals/assistant principals."

- "To focus the goals and objectives of districts as they support, monitor and evaluate their principals/assistant principals."

- "To guide professional development for principals/assistant principals."

- "To serve as a tool in developing coaching and mentoring programs for principals/assistant principals."

Six-Step Evaluation Process

The year-long formative and summative evaluation components are designed around a six-step process, which consists of orientation, preevaluation planning, meeting with the evaluator, data collection, preparation of a consolidated or comprehensive performance assessment, and follow-up meeting with the evaluator. Data or artifacts collected as part of the evaluation include school improvement plans, NC Working Conditions Survey data, student achievement and testing data, evidence of stakeholder involvement, evidence of shared decision making and distributed leadership, student dropout data, teacher retention data, and master school schedule documenting individual and collaborative planning for teachers. The North Carolina School Executive Evaluation and its accompanying components have been integrated into the online evaluation system so that all components of the evaluation (including rubric rating and scores and principal self-assessments, for example) are now completed, stored, and reviewed electronically. The supervisor and principal are given usernames and passwords to access and update and upload the relevant information during and after an evaluation as necessary.

Tips & Tools

Although no evaluation system is completely perfect, this evaluation system being implemented within the state of North Carolina exemplifies some of the key aspects of a strong evaluation system. For example, the system establishes clear sets of expectations and goals for the evaluation by establishing who will be assessed, who will provide feedback, the frequency with which the assessments will occur, and the use of multiple types data to get a 360-degree picture of principal performance. In addition, it is aligned to a set of standards and helps inform the professional goals and future professional development needs of the principal.

Questions to Consider

Following are six questions that charter management organizations or charter school boards should consider before implementing a similar evaluation system.

- What would hinder your charter school board or management organization from taking this real-life example and implementing it within your charter schools?
- What adjustments would have to be made for this real-life example to be implemented in your charter school?
- How long would it take for those adjustments to be made?
- Who would be involved?
- How much would it cost?
- Where would the fiscal resources come from?

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Tips & Tools

ABOUT THE NATIONAL CHARTER SCHOOL RESOURCE CENTER

The U.S. Department of Education is committed to promoting effective practices, providing technical assistance, and disseminating the resources critical to ensuring the success of charter schools across the country. To that end, the U.S. Department of Education, under a contract with Learning Point Associates, an affiliate of American Institutes for Research, has developed the National Charter School Resource Center. The Resource Center provides on-demand resources, information, and technical assistance to support successful planning, authorizing, implementation, and sustainability of high-quality charter schools; to share evaluations on the effects of charter schools; and to disseminate information about successful practices in charter schools.

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